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Joseph Cross**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OLD WINE AND NEW: OCCASIONAL
DISCOURSES ***

OLD WINE AND NEW:

Occasional Discourses.

BY

THE REV. JOSEPH CROSS, D.D., LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF "EVANGEL," "KNIGHT-BANNERET," "COALS FROM
THE ALTAR," "PAULINE CHARITY," AND
"EDENS OF ITALY."

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DEDICATORY EPISTLE.

TO THOMAS WHITTAKER, ESQ., PUBLISHER, NEW YORK.

MY DEAR FRIEND: In former times and other lands, when one wrote a book, he inscribed the volume to some distinguished personage—a bishop, a baron, a monarch, a magnate in the world of letters—through whose name it might win its way to popular favor, and achieve a success hardly to be hoped for from its own merit. Such overshadowing oaks seemed necessary to shield from sun and storm the tender undergrowth; and the dew that lay all night upon their branches the breezy morning shook off in showers of diamonds upon the humbler herbage at their roots. In an age pre-eminently of self-reliance and a country characterized no less by personal than political independence, authors have learned at length to walk alone, marching right into the heart of the public with no patronage but that of the publisher; and if a book have not the intrinsic qualities to bear the scorching beams and freezing blasts of criticism, down it must go amidst the *débris* of earth's abortive ambitions and ruined hopes. Not so much from conscious need of help as from high esteem of the noblest personal qualities, therefore, I beg leave upon this page to couple with my own a worthier name. Two years ago, when I placed in your trusty hands the manuscript of KNIGHT-BANNERET, I had the least possible idea of the harvest which might grow from so humble a seed-grain cast into a very questionable soil. The result was an encouraging disappointment; and EVANGEL soon followed, enlarging the horizon of hope; and EDENS OF ITALY sent a refreshing aroma over all the landscape; and COALS FROM THE ALTAR kindled assuring beacon-fires for the adventurer; and PAULINE CHARITY, supported by Faith and Hope, walked forth in queenly state. During the publication of these several productions, so pleasant has been our intercourse—so great your kindness, candor, courtesy, magnanimity, hospitality, and every other social virtue—that I look back upon the period as one of the happiest of my life; and now, at the close of the feast, hoping that our last bout may be the best, I cordially invite you to share with me OLD WINE AND NEW.

Yours till Paradise,
JOSEPH CROSS

Nov. 1, 1883.

PREFACE.

DEAR READER: In the preface to PAULINE CHARITY, did not the writer promise thee that volume should be his last? Some months later, however, at the bottom of the homiletical barrel, he found a few old acquaintances, in threadbare and tattered guise, smiling reproachfully out of the dust of an undeserved oblivion. He beckoned them forth, gave them new garments, and bade them go to the printer. And lo! here they are—twenty-two of them—in comely array, with fresh-anointed locks, knocking modestly at thy door.

If any of the former groups from the same family were deemed worthy of thy hospitality—if any of the twenty-two EVANGELISTS gladdened thy soul with good tidings—if any of the twenty-two KNIGHTS-BANNERET stimulated thy zeal in the holy conflict—if any of the twenty white-hooded sisters of CHARITY warmed thy heart with words of loving kindness—if any of the sixty seraphs, winged with sunbeams, laid upon thy lips a COAL FROM THE ALTAR—if any of the twelve cherubs, fresh from the EDENS OF ITALY, led thee through pleasant paths to goodly palaces and blooming arbors—turn not away unheard these twenty-two strangers, but welcome them graciously to the fellowship of thy house, and perchance the morrow's dawn may disclose the wings beneath their robes.

But if tempted to discard them as the vagrant offspring of a senile vanity thrust out to seek their fortune in the world of letters, know thou that such temptation is of the Father of lies. For not all of these are thy patriarch's Benjamins—sons of his old age. The leader of the band is his very Reuben—the beginning of his strength. Another is his lion-bannered Judah, washing his garments in the blood of grapes. In another may be recognized his long-lost Joseph, found at last in Pharaoh's chariot. And several others, peradventure, more ancient than thy father, though bearing neither gray beard nor wrinkled brow. And the consciousness of a better ambition than vanity ever inspired prompts their commission to the public, to speak a word in season to him that is weary—to comfort the mourners in Zion, giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for

weeping, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and filling the vale of Bochim with songs in the night. Nay, if the mixture of metaphors be not offensive to thy fastidious rhetoric, these brethren are sent down into Egypt to procure corn for thee and thy little ones, O Reader! that ye perish not in the famine of the land.

"Go to! the tropical language is misleading. We open the door to thy children, and find nothing but a hamper of WINE—twenty-two bottles—some labelled OLD, and others NEW."

As thou wilt, my gentle critic! Perhaps twenty-two jars of water only. Yet healthfully clear, and sweet to the taste, it is hoped thou wilt find the beverage; and if the Lord, present at the feast, but deign to look at it, thou mayest wonder that the good wine has been kept till now.

Of Edward Irving, when he died fifty years ago, a London editor wrote: "He was the one man of our time who more than all others preached his life and lived his sermons." To preach one's life were hardly apostolical, though to live one's sermons might be greatly Christian. At the former the author never aimed; of the latter there is little danger of his being suspected. Yet this book is in some sort the record of his personal history. For a farewell gift to the world, he long contemplated an autobiography—had actually begun the work, written more than a hundred pages, and sketched a promising outline of the whole; when, in an hour of indigestion, becoming disgusted, he dropped the enterprise, and made his manuscript a burnt offering to the "blues." As a substitute for the failure, these discourses represent him in the successive stages of his ministry, being arranged in the chronological order of production and delivery, with dates and occasions in footnotes—the only autobiography he could produce, the only one doubtless to be desired. Should grace divine make it in any measure effectual to the spiritual illumination of those who honor it with a perusal, he will sing his *Nunc Dimittis* with thankful heart, and wait calmly for the day when every faithful worker "shall have praise of God." Farewell.

J. C.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS, 1883.

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OLD WINE AND NEW.

I.

FILIAL HOPE. [1]

Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.—1 JOHN iii. 2.

"I am to depart, you to remain; but which shall have the happier lot, who can tell?" So spake Socrates to his friends just before he drank the fatal hemlock. In all the utterances of the ancient philosophy there is no sadder word. The uncertainty of the hereafter, the impenetrable gloom that shrouds the state of the departed, sets the contemplative soul shivering with mortal dread. Like the expiring Hobbes, more than two thousand years later, the grand old Athenian felt himself "taking a leap in the dark." In his case, however, there was more excuse than in that of the modern unbeliever. The dayspring from on high had not yet visited mankind. The morning star was still below the horizon. Four centuries must pass before the rising Sun of righteousness could bring the perfect day. The Christ came, the true Light of the world; and life and immortality, dawning from his manger, culminated upon his sepulchre. Redeeming Love has revealed to us more of God and man than all the sages of antiquity ever knew; and our reviving and ascending Redeemer has shed a flood of radiance upon the grave and whatever lies beyond. In the immortal Christ we have a sufficient answer to the patriarch's question—"If a man die, shall he live again?" In his mysteriously constituted personality taking our nature into union with the Godhead, by his vicarious passion ransoming that nature, and then rising with it from the dead and returning with it to heaven, he assures all who believe in him of an actual alliance with the living God and all the blissful immunities of life eternal. And thus the apostle's statement becomes the best expression of our filial hope in Christ: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

The ground of our glorious hope as disciples of Christ is found in our gracious state as sons of God. But is not this the relation of all men? Originally it was, but is not now. By creation indeed "we all are his offspring," but not by adoption and regeneration. Sin has cut off from that original relation the whole progeny of Adam, and disinherited us of all its rights and privileges. The paternal likeness is effaced from the human soul. Alienated from the life of God, men have become children of the wicked One. Only by restoring grace—"a new creation in Christ Jesus"—can they regain what they have lost. To effect this, came forth the Only Begotten from the bosom of the Father, and gave himself upon the cross a ransom for the sinful race. Whosoever believeth in him is saved, restored, forgiven, renewed after the image of his Creator in righteousness and true holiness. Jesus himself preached to Nicodemus the necessity of this new birth, and "born of God" is the apostolic description of the mighty transformation. More than any outward ordinance is here expressed—more than mere morality, or reformation of life—a clean heart created, a right spirit renewed, the inception of a higher life whereby the soul becomes partaker of the Divine Nature. All this, through faith in Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Now there is reconciliation and amity with God—"an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." More; there is sympathy, and sweet communion, and joyful co-operation, and spiritual assimilation, and oneness of will and desire, and free access to the throne of grace in every time of need. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying—Abba, Father." "And if children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." And oh! what an inheritance awaits us in the glorious manifestation of our Lord, when all his saints shall be glorified together with him! For, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Our sonship, you see, is the ground of our hope. Our hope, you will now see, is worthy of our sonship.

At present, indeed, our glorious destiny is not apparent. By faith we see it, dim and distant, as through the shepherds' glass; in hope we wait for it with calm patience, or press toward it with strong desire; but what it is—"the glory that shall be revealed in us"—we know not, and cannot know, till mortality shall be swallowed up of life. It is spiritual; we are carnal. It is heavenly; we are earthly. It is infinite; we are finite. It is altogether divine; we are but human. Some of God's artists, as St. Paul and St. John, have given us gorgeous pictures of it, which we gaze at with shaded eyes; but while we study them, we cannot help feeling that they fall far short of the copied original. In our present state, what idea can we form of the condition of the soul, and the mode of its subsistence, when dislodged from the body? Nay, what idea can we form of the natural body developing into the spiritual, and all its rudimental powers unfolding in their

perfection? Or, to speak more accurately and more scripturally, what idea can we form of the resurrection body, awaking from its long sleep in the dust, re-organized and re-invested—with new beauties, perhaps new organs, new senses, new faculties, all glorious in immortality? And the enfranchised intellect, who can guess the grandeur of its destiny—what new provinces of thought, new discoveries of truth, new revelations of science, new disclosures of the mysteries of nature and of God? And the spirit—the ransomed and purified spirit—who can imagine what perfection of love, what affluence of joy, what transports of worship and of song, what society and fellowship with the saints in light, it shall enjoy when it has entered its eternal rest? We know not how the statue looks till we see it unveiled; and the whole creation, as St. Paul writes to the Romans, is waiting for the unveiling of the sons of God. Now they are his hidden ones—hidden in the shadow of his wings, in the secret place of his tabernacle—their life hidden with Christ in God—their character and true glory hidden from the world—their ineffable destiny and reward hidden from themselves, till their dear Lord shall appear, and they also shall appear with him in glory. And well is it that our knowledge of the better world to come is so obscure and imperfect—necessarily obscure and imperfect, because God hath graciously revealed only what was essential to our salvation; for if he had revealed all that he might have revealed—if we could foresee and comprehend all that awaits us in the blessed everlasting future—we might have been so dazed and delighted with the splendors of the vision, as to be incapable of business, unfit for society, and better out of the world than in it. Wisely, therefore, God hath veiled the future, even from his saints. The oak is in the acorn, but we cannot divine its form, and must await its manifestation in the tree. Yet this we know, saith the apostle—and surely this ought to satisfy our highest ambition of knowledge—"that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Appear he certainly will. Let us not lose sight of this blessed hope. It is his own promise to the disciples on the eve of his departure: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; and where I am, there ye shall be also." And the angels of the ascension reiterate the assurance to them, as they stand gazing after him from the Mount of Olives: "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"—that is, visibly, personally, gloriously, in the clouds, with the holy angels. And what saith the apostle? "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him, he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation"—the second advent as real as the first, and as manifest to human sight. To such statements no mystical or figurative meaning can be given, without violence done to the language. Not in the destruction of Jerusalem was the prediction fulfilled; nor has it since been fulfilled, nor ever can be, in any revival or enlargement of the Church; neither does Jesus come to his disciples at death, but through death they pass to him. Come at length he will, however, and every eye shall see him sitting upon the throne of his glory. The redemption of our humanity by price pledges a further redemption by power, which cannot be accomplished without his personal return to the ransomed planet. "And we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

That likeness to our Lord must be both corporeal and spiritual. St. Paul speaks of the whole Church as "waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of the body;" and elsewhere states that the Saviour for whom we look "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body"—spiritualizing the natural, sublimating the material, endowing the physical organism with powers like his own, and adorning the long-dishonored dust with the radiant beauty of immortality. Yet more wonderful must be the change wrought upon the intellectual and spiritual nature. To be like "God manifest in the flesh"—what is it but to realize a mental development and maturity far transcending all that the wisest ever attained to in this mortal state, perpetual union of our redeemed humanity with the Divinity, and a blissful process of assimilation going on forever? Christ is light without darkness; and to be like him implies a clearness of understanding and a certitude of truth free from all prejudice, distortion, and blinding error. Christ is divine charity incarnate; and to be like him is to love as he loved—with the ardor, the intensity, the self-forgetfulness, which drew him to the manger and led him to the cross. Christ is immaculate holiness made visible to men; and to be like him is to be as spotless, as faultless, as free from iniquity, perversity, hypocrisy, impurity, as He who could challenge the world with the demand—"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Christ is every moral excellence combined and blended in human character; and to be like him is to be subject to all those high principles and noble impulses which give him infinite preeminence as a model to mankind, and make him in angelic estimation "the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." Christ is the King whom God the Father hath exalted above all powers and principalities even in heavenly places; and to be like him is to reign with him, partners of his glory upon an imperishable throne, when all the dominions of earth shall have passed away as a forgotten dream. All this, and much beside that no human imagination can conceive, is manifestly comprehended in the apostolic statement, that "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe"—men and angels, the whole universe, beholding in every disciple a perfect *facsimile* of the glorified Master. And thus the declaration is triumphantly verified: "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Spirit is invisible. In his essence, we shall never see God. That men might see him, he became incarnate in human flesh. Except in the person of Jesus Christ, his creatures will never see him. But even Christ is far away, gone back to heaven, and seen only by faith. Often, no doubt, his disciples wish they could see him with their eyes of flesh; but they never will till his promised personal return. With the apostle, they are ever thinking and speaking of him whom, not having seen, they love; in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy

unspeakable and full of glory. But often, looking at him even by faith through the disturbing and distorting media of prejudice and passion, they make sad mistakes about him, about his complex nature, his divine perfections, his human character, his former work in the flesh, his present mediation with the Father, his spiritual relation to the Church, his headship over the redeemed creation. We can appreciate another only through his like within ourselves, our sympathy with his moral qualities. Wanting such sympathy, vice never appreciates virtue, the carnal never discerns the spiritual, the selfish never understands the benevolent and disinterested. Failing to discover the true substratum of character, they mistake motives, ridicule peculiarities, and give no credit for qualities which they cannot perceive. Thus, through the imperfection of our sympathy with the Saviour, or the utter want of such sympathy, even when we regard him by faith, we see him not as he is. Ask the world, "What think ye of Christ?" you will get a great variety of answers. One will tell you he is a myth, a phantom, a creation of genius, that never had a real historic existence. Another will call him a pretender, an impostor, a false prophet, utterly unworthy of human credit and confidence. Another pronounces him an amiable enthusiast, and a very good man; but self-deceived as to his mission and ministry, and not a teacher sent from God. Another deems him a wise moralist, enunciating principles and precepts such as the world never heard before; and in his life, an example of all that is pure and excellent; but not essential and eternal God, nor a vicarious sacrifice for human sin. But here is one who regards him as supremely divine, and yet "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" and, by the nail-prints in his palms and the thorn-marks on his brow, so shall he be recognized when he cometh in his kingdom, and the nations of the quickened dead go marching to his throne. All mistakes about him will thus be corrected; and those who have seen him only through a glass darkly, shall see him face to face; and all who have loved and honored him as their Saviour, and trusted in him as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, awaking in his likeness from the dust, shall begin the antiphon which preludes the eternal song: "This is our God! we have waited for him, and he will save us! This is the Lord! we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!" Oh that we all may then be found like him, and see him as he is!

[1] The author's first sermon, preached at Pompey Hill, Onondaga County, N.Y., on the sixteenth anniversary of his nativity, July 4, 1829—written afterwards, and often repeated during the fifty-four years of his ministry—the thought here faithfully reproduced, the language but little changed.

II.

REST FOR THE WEARY.[1]

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—MATT.
xi. 28.

A fine legend is related of St. Jerome. Many years he dwelt in Bethlehem, the town of his dear Lord's nativity. Hard by was the cave, formerly occupied as a stable, in which the blessed Babe was born. Here the holy man spent many a night in prayer and meditation. During one of these—waking or sleeping, we know not—he saw the divine Infant, a vision of most radiant beauty. Overwhelmed with love and wonder, the saint exclaimed: "What shall I give thee, sweet child? I will give thee all my gold!" "Heaven and earth are mine," answered the lovely apparition, "and I have need of nothing; but give thy gold to my poor disciples, and I will accept it as given to myself." "Willingly, O blessed Jesus! will I do this," replied the saint; "but something I must give thee for thyself, or I shall die of sorrow!" "Give me, then, thy sins," rejoined the Christ, "thy troubled conscience, thy burden of condemnation!" "What wilt thou do with them, dear Jesus?" asked Jerome in sweet amazement. "I will take them all upon myself," was the reply; "gladly will I bear thy sins, quiet thy conscience, blot out thy condemnation, and give thee my own eternal peace." Then began the holy man to weep for joy, saying: "Ah, sweet Saviour! how hast thou touched my heart! I thought thou wouldst have something good from me; but no, thou wilt have only the evil! Take, then, what is mine, and grant me what is thine; so am I helped to everlasting life!"

This, my dear brethren, is what Jesus, with unspeakable compassion, offers to do for us all. He would have us bring the several burdens under which we toil and faint, and lay them down at his feet. Pardon for guilt he would give us, peace for trouble, assurance for doubt and fear, and for all our fruitless agony divine repose. See how miserably men mistake his gospel, when they regard it merely as a set of doctrines to be believed, of duties to be performed, of ceremonies to be observed, instead of a mercy to be received, a blessing to be enjoyed, a salvation offered for our acceptance. It is indeed the unspeakable gift of God, the sovereign remedy of all our ills; in which, as rational and immortal beings, fallen in Adam, but redeemed by Christ, we have an

infinite interest. There is a tenderness in the invitation, combined with a moral sublimity, demanding for its utterance the melody of an angel's tongue, with the accompaniment of a seraph's harp; and we ought to listen to the words of Jesus to-day with a faith, a love, a joy, such as Simon, James and John never knew, nor the pardoned sinner of Magdala, sitting in rapt wonder at the Master's feet. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

How suitable was this address to those who first heard it, laboring and heavy laden with the costly rites and burdensome observances of the Levitical law! Those rites and observances required a large portion of their time and a larger expenditure of money; yet of their real nature and meaning the common people knew very little, and therefore felt them to be a burden which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. Types and symbols they were of better things to come; but they could not take away sin, nor quiet a troubled conscience, nor give any assurance of the reconciliation and favor of Heaven. For this, God must be manifested in human flesh, the Prince of peace must come and set up his kingdom among men, by the blood of his sacrifice redeeming us from the curse of the violated law, and securing an eternal salvation to all them that obey him. Jesus here assures the Jews that he is what John the Baptist has already proclaimed him—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." It is as if he had said: "Come away from your bloody altars and sacrificial fires. These are but the shadows, of which I am the substance; the prophecies, of which I am the fulfilment. In me they all find their meaning and their virtue, and by my mission as the promised Saviour they are set aside forever. Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

Some there were, no doubt, among the hearers of Jesus, who were laboring and heavy laden with vain efforts to justify themselves by the deeds of the law. The Jews imagined that by doing more than their duty they could make God their debtor, and by extra acts of piety and mercy insure their own salvation as a matter of sheer justice. And even among Christians, who profess to take Christ as their only Saviour and his merit as the only ground of their justification before God, are there not many who are not altogether free from this Pharisaic leaven, endeavoring by their moral virtues and perfect obedience to make amends for the errors and delinquencies of the past? But creature merit is absurd, sinful merit impossible, and "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." The creature belongs to the Creator; and loving the Creator with all his soul, and serving the Creator with all his energies, and continuing that love and service without fault or failure throughout all the immortal duration of his being, he merely renders to God his own, and is still an unprofitable servant. But the sinner, already in arrears of duty to the Creator, can never, by yielding to God what is always due even from sinless creatures, satisfy the demands of the law upon its transgressor; and without some other means and method of pardon, which the divine wisdom alone can reveal, the old debt remains uncanceled upon the books, and no power can avert the penalty. Moreover, the sinner by his sin becomes incapable of offering to God any true love or acceptable service without divine grace preventing and co-operating to that end, so that no possible credit can accrue to human virtue and obedience, but all the glory must redound to God. Christ calls us away from all such futile hopes and fruitless endeavors. "I am your Saviour," he saith; "by no other name can you be saved; by no other medium can you come to the Father; through no merit but mine can you obtain absolution from your guilt; through no sacrifice or intercession but mine can you know that peace and purity for which you have hitherto striven and struggled in vain; come unto me, and I will give you rest."

And still another class, found in every large gathering of men and women, especially wherever the dayspring from on high hath dawned, there must have been among these hearers of the divine Preacher—those, namely, who were laboring and heavy laden with the conscious burden of their guilt. True it is, indeed, that such as are going on still in their trespasses do not commonly feel their sins to be a burden. They rejoice in them, and roll them as a sweet morsel under their tongues, talking of them as if it were a fine thing to be foolish and an honor to be infamous. But when the law of God is effectually brought home to the understanding and the heart—when they see themselves in the light of the divine holiness, and the whole inner man seems converted into conscience—then they feel that sin "is an evil and exceeding bitter thing," and cry out with the terrified Philippian, "What must I do to be saved?" or exclaim with the awakened and illuminated Saul, "Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" or, smiting a guilty breast, pray with the publican of the parable, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"As writhes the gross
Material part when in the furnace cast,
So writhes the soul the victim of remorse!
Remorse—a fire that on the verge of God's
Commandment burns, and on the vitals feeds
Of all who pass!"[2]

And remorse is accompanied with terror, and fearful apprehensions of the wrath to come. Condemned already, the affrighted sinner sees a more formidable sword than that of Damocles

hanging over his head. Amidst all his carnal pleasures and social enjoyments, he is like that prince of Norway, who went to his wedding festival well knowing that it would end in his execution; and at the altar, and in the gay procession, and over the table loaded with luxuries, and through palatial halls strewn with flowers and ringing with music and merriment, saw everywhere and heard continually the preparations for the fatal hour. The agony of such a situation how can we imagine? I once knew an awakened sinner who described himself as enclosed in the centre of a granite mountain, no room to move a muscle, no seam or crevice through which one ray of light could reach him—picture of utter helplessness and absolute despair! Ah! my brethren! He who made the granite may dissolve it, or reduce the solid mountain to dust! And is there any guilt or misery from which the Mighty to save cannot deliver the soul that trusts in him? Your sin may be great, but his mercy is greater. Your enemies may threaten, but has he not conquered them and nailed them to his cross? To whom, then, will you apply for help, but to your divine and all-sufficient Saviour? Go not to human philosophy,

"Which leads to bewilder and dazzles to blind,"

but cannot satisfy the mind nor tranquillize the conscience. Go not to the ritual law of Israel, which could never make the comers thereunto perfect; nor to the blessed saints and martyrs, none of whom can avail you as mediators between your sinful souls and God; nor depend upon sacraments and sermons, for these can aid you only as they bring you into spiritual contact with Christ, the light and life of the world. Hear him calling—rise and obey the call—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Rest is a pleasant word—how pleasant to the husbandman, toiling on through the long summer day! how pleasant to the traveller, pressing forward with his load to the end of his tedious journey! how pleasant to the mariner, after tossing for weeks on stormy seas, stepping upon his native shore and hasting away to his childhood's home! how pleasant to the warrior, when, having won the last battle of his last campaign, he returns with an honorable discharge to his mother's cottage among the hills! Rest is what we all want, and what Jesus offers to the weary and heavy laden soul. I saw a young lady bowed down with grief at the memory of her sins; and when I spoke to her, she looked up with a smile that made rainbows on her tears, and said: "O sir! I have had more happiness weeping over my sins for the last half hour than I ever had in sinning through all my life!" And if

"The seeing eye, the feeling sense,
The mystic joys of penitence,"

have in them so much sweetness for the soul, what shall we say of

"The speechless awe that dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love!"

It is the rest of conscious pardon and satisfied desire; the rest of faith, seeing the invisible and grasping the infinite; of hope, reposing in the infallible promise and anticipating a blissful immortality; of resignation, losing its own will in the will of God, and leaving all things to the disposal of the divine wisdom and goodness; of perfect confidence and trust, saying with St. Paul: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that, he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Christ is the love of God incarnate in our nature; and where shall the loving John find rest, but in the bosom of the Eternal Love? And, tossed by many a tempest, or racked with keenest pain, why should not the weary and heavy-laden disciple of the divine Man of sorrows sing like one of his faithful servants whose flesh and spirit were being torn asunder by anguish:—

"Yet, gracious God, amid these storms of nature,
Thine eyes behold a sweet and sacred calm
Reign through the realm of conscience. All within
Lies peaceful, all composed. 'Tis wondrous grace
Keeps off thy terrors from this humble bosom,
Though stained with sins and follies, yet serene
In penitential peace and cheerful hope,
Sprinkled and guarded with atoning blood.
Thy vital smiles amid this desolation,
Like heavenly sunbeams hid behind the clouds,
Break out in happy moments. With bright radiance
Cleaving the gloom, the fair celestial light
Softens and gilds the horrors of the storm,
And richest cordial to the heart conveys.
Oh! glorious solace of immense distress!
A conscience and a God! This is my rock
Of firm support, my shield of sure defence
Against infernal arrows. Rise, my soul!
Put on thy courage! Here's the living spring
Of joys divinely sweet and ever new—
A peaceful conscience and a smiling Heaven!

My God! permit a sinful worm to say,
Thy Spirit knows I love thee. Worthless wretch!
To dare to love a God! Yet grace requires,
And grace accepts. Thou seest my laboring mind.
Weak as my zeal is, yet my zeal is true;
It bears the trying furnace. I am thine,
By covenant secure. Incarnate Love
Hath seized, and holds me in almighty arms.
What can avail to shake me from my trust?
Amidst the wreck of worlds and dying nature,
I am the Lord's, and he forever mine!"[3]

Hear ye, then, the loving words of Jesus. The invitation is unlimited; the grace is free for all. No sin is too great to be forgiven, no burden too heavy to be removed, no power in earth or hell able to keep you back from Christ. However dark your minds, however hard your hearts, however dead your spirits, hear and answer: "I will arise and go!"

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Lo! with outstretched arms he hastes to meet you, with tokens of welcome and the kiss of peace.

"Ready for you the angels wait,
To triumph in your blest estate;
Tuning their harps, they long to praise
The wonders of redeeming grace."

All heaven, with expectant joy, awaits your coming. Come, and satisfy the soul that travailed for you in Olivet! Come, and gladden the heart that broke for you upon the cross! Come, and at the nail-pierced feet find your eternal rest!

[1] Preached in Syracuse, N.Y., 1830; at Weston-super-Mare, Somersetshire, Eng., 1857.]

[2] Pollok.

[3] Isaac Watts in his last illness.

III.

MY BELOVED AND FRIEND.[1]

This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!—SONG OF SOL. V.
16.

By the ablest interpreters and critics of Holy Scripture, the Song of Solomon has generally been regarded as an epithalamium, or nuptial canticle. But, like many other parts of the sacred volume, doubtless, it has a mystical and secondary application, which is more important than the literal and primary. The true Solomon is Christ, and the Church is his beautiful Shulamite. In this chapter, the Bride sings the glory of her divine Spouse, and our text concludes the description. But what is thus true of the Church in her corporate capacity, is true also of her individual members; and without its verification in their personal experience, it could not be thoroughly verified in the organic whole. Every regenerate and faithful soul may say of the heavenly Bridegroom: "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!"

Christ for a beloved—the Son of God for a friend! What nobler theme could occupy our thoughts? what sublimer privilege invest the saints in light?

So constituted is man, that love and friendship are necessary to his happiness, almost essential to his existence. Accumulate in your coffers the wealth of all kingdoms, and gather into your diadems the glories of the greatest empires. Bid every continent, island and ocean bring forth their hidden treasures, and pour the sparkling tribute at your feet. Subsidize and

appropriate whatever is precious in the solar planets or magnificent in the stellar jewellery of heaven, and hold it all by an immortal tenure. Yet, without at least one kindred spirit to whom you might communicate your joy, one congenial soul from whom you might claim sympathy in your sorrow, the loveless heart were still unsatisfied—

"The friendless master of the worlds were poor!"

Among the children of men, however, love and friendship, in one respect or another, will always be found defective, liable to many irregularities and interruptions, painful suspicions and sad infirmities, which mar their beauty, tarnish their purity, and imbitter their consolations, turning the ambrosia into wormwood and the nectar into gall. Sometimes they are manifest only in words, and smiles, and hollow courtesies, and other external tokens; while the heart is as void of all true affection and confidence as the whitewashed sepulchre is of life and beauty. Beginning with flattery, they often proceed by hypocrisy, and end in betrayal. Or if there be sincerity in the outset, it may prove as impotent as childhood, as changeful as autumn winds, or as fleeting as the morning cloud. Or if not destroyed by some trivial offence, or suffered to die of cold neglect, their ties are clipped at length by the shears of fate, and no love or friendship is possible in the everlasting banishment of the unblest.

But amidst all the sad uncertainties of human attachments, how pleasant it is to know that "there is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother"—a Beloved whose affection is sincere, ardent, unchanging, imperishable—who can neither deceive nor forsake those who have entered into covenant with him—from whom death itself will not divide us, but bring us to a nearer and sweeter fellowship with him than we are capable now of imagining! Enoch walked with God till he was less fit for earth than for heaven, and St. John leaned upon the heart of Jesus till his own pulse beat in unison with the divine. Drawn into this blissful communion, every true disciple becomes one spirit with the Lord. Christ calls his servants friends, receives them into his confidence, and reveals to them the secrets of his kingdom. Not ashamed to own them now, he will confess them hereafter before his Father and the holy angels. "They shall be mine," saith he, "in that day when I make up my jewels." And the happy Bride, dwelling with ineffable delight upon the perfections of her Spouse, and anticipating the fulfilment of his promise when he cometh in his glory, concludes her song of joy with the declaration—"This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

What, then, are the conditions on which such intimacy of the soul with Christ is to be established? Nothing is required but what is in the very nature of things necessary. Prophet, Priest and King, he can take into amicable alliance with him only such as respect and honor him in these relations. The prophet cannot be the beloved and the friend of those who refuse to hear his word; nor the priest, of those who reject his sacrifice and intercession; nor the king, of those who are still in arms against his gracious government. We must love him, if we would have his love; we must show ourselves friendly, if we would enjoy his friendship. Having died to redeem us, he ever lives to plead for us, and by a thousand ambassadors he offers us his love and friendship; but, no response on our part, no sympathy or co-operation, how can we call him our beloved and our friend? "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" There must be reconciliation and assimilation. We must submit to Christ's authority, and co-operate with his mercy. We must love what he loves, and hate what he hates. His friends must be our friends, and his enemies our enemies. The world, the flesh, and the devil, we must for his sake renounce; reckoning ourselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Does not St. Paul tell us that as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ?[2] What does he mean? That in baptism we not only enter into covenant with Christ, but also assume his character, and profess our serious purpose to walk as he walked, conformed to his perfect example, and governed by the same divine principles. As when one puts on the peculiar habit of the Benedictines or the Franciscans, he declares his intention to obey the rules and copy the life of St. Benedict or St. Francis, the founders of those orders; so, in putting on the Christian habit when you are baptized, you avow yourself the disciple of Christ, and openly declare your death thenceforth to sin and your new birth to righteousness. And without any thing in your heart and life corresponding to such a reality, how can you say of Jesus—"This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!"

But where there are no attractive qualities, there can be neither love nor friendship. Something there must be to inspire affection and confidence. In our divine Beloved resides every mental grace and every moral virtue. Our heavenly Friend is "the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." Of the excellency of Christ all the charms of nature afford but the faintest images, and poetry and eloquence falter in the celebration of his praise. I ask your attention here to a few particulars.

Jesus is always perfectly sincere. With him there are no shams, no mere pretences, no unmeaning utterances of love or friendship. All is real, all is most significant, and there are depths in his heart which no line but God's can fathom.

And his ardor is equal to his sincerity. "Behold how he loved him!" said the Jews when they saw him weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. "Behold how he loveth them!" say the angels when they witness the far more wonderful manifestations of his friendship for the saints. Let the profane speak of Damon and Pythias, and the pious talk of David and Jonathan; there is no other heart like that of Jesus Christ, no other bond so strong as that which binds him to his disciples.

And his disinterestedness is commensurate with his ardor. In human friendships we often detect some selfish end; Christ seeks not his own glory or profit, but sacrifices himself for our salvation. No earthly affection is greater than that which lays down life for a friend; Christ died for us while we were yet enemies, upon the cross prayed for those who nailed him there, and from the throne still offers eternal life to those who are constantly crucifying him afresh and putting him to open shame. And in all his gracious fellowship with those who love him, it is their good he seeks, their honor he consults, their great and endless comfort he wishes to secure.

And not less wonderful are his patience and forbearance toward them. How meekly he endured the imperfections of the chosen twelve as long as he remained with them in the flesh! How tenderly he bore their misconceptions of his purpose, their misconstructions of his language, their fierce and fiery tempers, their slowness of heart to believe! How beautifully his patience carried him through all his life of suffering, and sustained him in the bitter anguish of the cross! And since his return to heaven, how often, and in how many ways, have his redeemed people put his forbearance to the proof! Try any other friend as you try Jesus, and see how long he will endure it. But our divine Beloved will not faint nor be weary, till he have accomplished in us his work of grace, and brought us in safety to his Father's house.

And who ever matched him in beneficence and bounty? "He is able," saith the apostle, "to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think." His ability is as large as his love, and that is immeasurable and inconceivable. Other friends, loving us sincerely, may want power to help us; he hath all power in heaven and earth. They may be far away in the time of need; he saith—"Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." As the vine gives its life to the branches, as the shepherd gives his time and care to the sheep, as the monarch gives riches and honors to his favorites, as the royal spouse gives himself and all he has to his chosen bride, so gives Christ to his elect, making them joint-heirs with himself to all that he inherits as the only begotten Son of God—unspeakable grace now, eternal glory hereafter! "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!"

And what confiding intimacy find we in this heavenly friendship! The father, the brother, the husband, live in the same house, occupy the same room, eat and drink at the same table, with their beloved; Christ comes into our hearts, takes up his abode there, and feasts with us, and we with him. "Shall I hide from Abraham," said Jehovah, "the thing that I do?" "therefore Abraham was called the friend of God." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," saith the Psalmist, "and he will show them his covenant." "Henceforth I call you not servants," said Jesus to the twelve, "but I have called you friends, for whatsoever I have received of my Father I have made known unto you." "Eye hath not seen," writes St. Paul, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." Every true disciple, like Ignatius, carries the Crucified in his heart, and knows and comprehends with all saints, the lengths and breadths and depths and heights of the love that passeth knowledge, being filled with the fulness of God.

And all this is unailing and everlasting. Having loved his own who were in the world, Christ loved them unto the end, loved them still upon his cross, and ceased not to love them when he left them and returned to the Father, but remembered his promise to pray for them, and to send them another Comforter who should abide with them forever, and finally to come again and receive them unto himself, that where he is they might be also. Nearly nineteen centuries are past since he ascended whence he came, and still the promise holds good, and the lapse of ages has not diminished his affection, and to-day he loves his friends as tenderly as when he talked so sweetly with the little flock at the Last Supper and along the path to Olivet. Death, which dissolves all other friendships, confirms this forever. "I have a desire to depart," wrote the heroic Christian prisoner from Rome—"I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Not long had the dear old man to wait. One morning—the 29th of June, A.D. 68—the door of his dungeon opened, St. Paul went forth, walked a mile along the way to Ostia, with his hands bound behind him knelt down, the sweep of a sword gleamed over him like the flash of an angel's wing, and the servant was with his Lord!

Thus, dear brethren, we see the incomparable qualities of our Beloved, the divine excellences of our Friend. Perfect wisdom is here, perfect knowledge, perfect prudence, perfect justice, perfect purity, perfect benevolence, perfect magnanimity, with immutability and immortality—whatever is necessary to win and hold the heart—all blending in the character of Christ. Is he not the very friend we need? How, without him, can we bear to live or dare to die? What are riches, culture, power, splendor, without his love? What can our poor human friends do for us in the hour of death? What could worlds of such friends do for us in the day of judgment? "In the name of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge." Flee away, ye heavens! Dissolve, thou earth! and vanish! It is my Beloved that cometh with his chariots! It is my Friend that sitteth upon the throne!

Oh! my brethren! Christ Jesus loves to make new friends, though he never abandons the old. Let us accept his gracious overtures, and join ourselves unto the Lord in an everlasting covenant. The poorest and vilest of us all would he take home to his heart, and love him freely and forever. The most unworthy of all the human race would he gladly introduce to the fellowship of saints and the innumerable company of angels, and seat the pardoned sinner at his side upon the throne. Oh! when I enter the metropolis, and hail the immortal millions of the blood-washed, and kneel to kiss the nail-pierced feet of the King, while all the harps and voices that have welcomed me go silent for his gracious salutation, with what rapture, as I rise, shall I look round upon the happy multitude and say—"This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!"

[1] Preached at a wedding festival, 1833.

[2] Gal. iii. 27.

IV.

REFUGE IN GOD.[1]

Be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me.—Ps. xxxi. 2.

On a superb arch in one of the halls of the Alhambra, the traveller reads as he enters: "I seek my refuge in the Lord of the morning." The sentiment is worthy of Holy Scripture, whence doubtless it was taken by the writer of the Koran. More than two thousand years earlier than Mohammed, Moses had said to the beloved tribes, just before he ascended to his mountain death-bed: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms." And how often does King David, environed with dangers and oppressed with sorrows, comfort himself with the assurance of an almighty protection and support! "Thou art my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock; and now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies that are round about me." "Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy; I will abide in thy tabernacle forever, I will trust in the covert of thy wings." "Thou art my hiding-place: thou wilt preserve me from trouble; thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance." And so in a hundred other passages of his psalms, and notably in the words we have chosen as the basis of this discourse: "Be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me." In all such utterances, there seems to be some reference to the Hebrew cities of refuge, whither the manslayer fled from the avenger of blood, where he remained unmolested till he could have an impartial hearing, and whence, if found innocent of premeditated murder, he finally came forth acquitted amidst the congratulations of his family and friends. Here is the double idea of escape from persecution and security from punishment; and with reference to both these, the psalmist seeks his refuge in the Lord of the morning.

The first idea is refuge from persecution. David's persecutions were varied, and violent, and long continued. How sadly he tells the story, and pours out his melting soul in song! Deceitful and bloody men, full of all subtlety and malignity, compassed him about like bees, like strong bulls of Bashan, like a troop of lions from the desert. Daily they imagined mischief against him, and consulted together to cast him down from his excellency. They laid to his charge things which he knew not. To the spoiling of his soul, they rewarded him evil for good. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon him with their teeth. As with a sword in his bones, they reproached him; saying continually, "Where is now thy God?" In his adversity they openly rejoiced, and with his misfortunes made themselves merry. They persecuted him whom God had smitten, and talked to the grief of him whom the Most High had wounded. With cruel hatred they hated him; yea, they tore him in pieces, and ceased not.

With these woful complaints agree the recorded facts of his life. One while we see him pursued like a partridge upon the mountains by the royal army, with his royal father-in-law at its head; from whom he escapes only by frequent flight, concealment in caverns, and weary sojourn at the court of a pagan king. And later in life we behold him driven from his throne, and chased from house and hold, by his own insurgent son; while Shimmei comes forth to curse the weeping fugitive, and cast stones at the Lord's anointed; and Ahithophel, his former familiar friend and courtly *confidant*, with whom he has often taken sweet counsel and walked in the house of God, lifts up the heel against him, and basely goes over to the standard of the conspirators.

No wonder he exclaims, as with the sigh of a breaking heart: "Save me, O God; for the waters

are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried; mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God. They that hate me without cause are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.... Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none."^[2] "I mourn in my complaint and make a noise, because of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me; fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest; lo! then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness; I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."^[3]

Vain wish, O disquieted and trembling soul! No wings, no distance, no solitude, can save thee. Nearer at hand thou shalt find thy refuge, even in the Lord of the morning. And well knows the persecuted king where to look for succor and consolation. "O Lord, my God! in thee do I put my trust. Save me from them that persecute me, and deliver me; lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver."^[4] "Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them that put their trust in thee from those who rise up against them! Keep me as the apple of thine eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wing, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies who compass me about."^[5] "Plead my cause, O Lord! with them that strive with me; fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help; draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."^[6]

How expressive is all this of utter helplessness, and reliance upon the living God! What fervent prayer is here! what faith in a personal power and a special providence which no human agency can baffle or resist! Proud mortals! talk no more of the strong will, the valiant arm, the dauntless courage, and your own self-sufficiency! "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." What is the strategy of generals and the prowess of armies, to him "who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky"? Faith as a grain of mustard-seed is better than all your military science, and the prayer of the humblest peasant is mightier than embattled millions. The prayer of faith divides the sea, cleaves the granite, marshals the troops of the tempest, and makes the angels of God our allies. "When I call upon thee, then shall mine enemies be put to flight; this I know, for God is on my side." Such is David's confidence; such, my brethren, be ours! Is not every attribute of Jehovah in league with the devout believer, and all his infinite resources pledged to the support of his servants? And without any doubt of a divine hearing or fear of ultimate failure, every persecuted Christian may pray to the God of David: "Be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me."

The second idea is refuge from punishment. The chief element of David's distress is a painful consciousness of guilt. It is conscience that wrings the wormwood for him into every cup of sorrow. It is remorse for past transgression that turns his tears into gall and makes his persecutions intolerable. Pure and innocent, he might defy his enemies, he might glory in tribulations. But he is forced to regard the wicked as God's sword for the punishment of his sins; and in all his pleadings we hear the voice of the penitent—sad confessions, bitter self-reproaches, touching appeals to the mercy of Heaven. "Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. Deliver me from my transgressions; make me not a reproach of the foolish.... Remove thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of thy hand."^[7] "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up. Hear me, O Lord! for thy loving-kindness is good. Turn unto me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies; and hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble. Hear me speedily."^[8]

A good man, we all know, may be surprised by temptation, and so fall into grievous sin. Thus some of God's holiest servants have committed enormous crimes. Not the single or occasional act, however, constitutes character; but the habit of a man's life—his dominant impulse and prevailing tendency. To judge St. Peter, for example, by the one solitary instance of defection, were manifestly unfair; when his whole course, up to that moment, and ever afterward, was marked by uncompromising fidelity to the Master, with the most heroic daring and enduring in his service. Far more just were it to estimate the man by the tears which he wept when the reproving glance brought home the guilt to his conscience, and by his subsequent earnest endeavors to undo the evil he had done and honor the Saviour he had denied.

Apply this principle to the royal penitent. Who ever more truly loved God, or more honestly sought to serve him? Was not holy obedience the tenor and tendency of his life? If he erred in numbering the people—if he took Uriah's wife to his bosom, and slew the husband to conceal the crime—it was under the power of peculiar temptation, which we, having never experienced, are quite incapable of estimating; and those deplorable deeds are the only recorded exceptions—the manifest violent contradictions—to a long life of singular piety, purity and uprightness. And now, made sensible of his sin, mark you how bitterly he grieves for it, and how earnestly he groans for its forgiveness:—

"Have mercy upon me, O God! according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of

thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God! thou God of my salvation! and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness."[\[9\]](#)

What keen remorse and penitential shame are here! Was there ever a more ingenuous confession, a more thorough contrition, a more profound humility, or a more utter self-despair? The royal sinner seems to see the sin in all its hideousness, and to hate it with unutterable hatred. He seeks no subterfuge, attempts no extenuation; but charges the guilt home, with all its aggravations, upon his own soul. Never can he forgive his folly, nor weep tears, enough to express his sorrow for the fault.

Would to Heaven we might all thus feel our guilt, and haste to the shelter of the divine mercy! Sinners—great sinners—are we all. Is there one of us that has not sinned more deeply than David ever did? And, instead of being an exceptional act, our sin has been the habit of our lives. Justice, with double-flaming sword, is hard upon our heels. What shall we do, or whither turn, for safety? To thee, O Crucified Love! we come; and, with broken hearts, cast ourselves down at thy feet. All other saviours we renounce: all other merits we disclaim; all other sacrifices we abjure. Thou of God art made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Perishing, we implore thy mercy. Take us to the arms that were stretched upon the cross. Hide us in the heart that was opened by the soldier's spear. When we faint in the valley of the shadow of death, let us feel the assuring pressure of the nail-pierced hand. When the heavens are flaming above and the earth is dissolving beneath, "be thou our strong rock, for a house of defence to save us"!

[\[1\]](#) Preached in Ithaca, N.Y., 1838.

[\[2\]](#) Ps. lxix. 1-4, 19, 20.

[\[3\]](#) Ps. lv. 2-8.

[\[4\]](#) Ps. vii. 1, 2.

[\[5\]](#) xvii. 7, 8.

[\[6\]](#) xxxv. 1-3.

[\[7\]](#) Ps. xxxvii, 7, 8, 10.

[\[8\]](#) Ps. lxix. 14-17.

[\[9\]](#) Ps. li. 1-4, 7-14.

V.

PARENTAL DISCIPLINE.[\[1\]](#)

His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.—1 SAM. iii. 13.

Few things in the Bible are more beautiful than the child-life of Samuel. A gift of the loving God to a devout but sorrowful woman, his mother gladly gave him back to the Giver, and he ministered before the Lord in the sanctuary at Shiloh. At that time Eli was both high-priest and magistrate in Israel. As a man of God, and to him much more than a father, Samuel seems to have loved him very tenderly and honored him very highly. To ease himself somewhat of his onerous duties, perhaps, Eli had raised his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, to the dignity of the priesthood. In the exercise of their sacred trust, the young men had committed great excesses and abuses. From all sides the fact came to the ears of their father. Sweetly and gently he remonstrated with the offenders, but neglected to hold them back with the strong hand of parental authority. Probably from the first there had been some radical defect in the moral discipline of the family. An amiable and indulgent father, Eli had neglected the severer duty

which his sacred office, even more than his paternal relation, imposed upon him. To make him sensible of his great delinquency, the guilt of his sons must be brought home upon his hoary head.

"Divinely called and strongly moved,
A prophet from a child approved,"

Samuel is commissioned to announce to him the heavy tidings, that God will judge his house forever, because "his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

In the outset, we cannot help observing the difference between the sons of Eli and his little ward. Samuel received his first lessons from the lips of a godly mother in the quiet home at Ramah. From his earliest consciousness he knew that he was to be a Nazarite, consecrated wholly to the service of Jehovah. His special training afterward in the house of the Lord was well adapted to fit him for the grand career before him. The gross misconduct of some who ought to have set him the best example must have wounded deeply his innocent heart, while it impressed him strongly with the deadly evil of sin and the mischief resulting inevitably from the relaxation of morals among the rulers of the people and the ministers of religion. Growing up in daily contact with the mysteries and symbols of the divine service, the sacred ritual which was to Hophni and Phinehas merely an empty form was to him replete with the spirit and power of holiness, elevating his thoughts, purifying his feelings, and moulding his whole character to its noble design. The names and things with which he was constantly occupied conformed him gradually but unalterably to God's gracious purpose, and made him the steadfast and uncompromising servant of the Most High—the man to reprove, rebuke, exhort, instruct the people—to retrieve losses, restore justice, reform abuses, assuage excitements, reduce chaos to order, establish the schools of the prophets, and wield a controlling power over the throne. Such a ministry required a character of steady growth, and the personal influence of a consistent and holy life. None of your modern revivals could ever have made a Samuel.

True it is, indeed, that some of God's most eminent servants—as St. Paul and St. Augustine—were converted in manhood, after a wasted youth of sin and crime; yet such instances are no real exceptions to the rule, that God directs the training of his servants from childhood, shaping his instruments by every act of his providence. St. Paul was thoroughly educated in the rabbinical learning of his day, and well acquainted with Greek literature and Greek philosophy, and so far prepared for his Christian apostleship to both Jews and Gentiles; and the logical and rhetorical studies of St. Augustine unconsciously made him the great Christian dialectician that he was, while the sensual indulgences of his earlier years intensified his knowledge both of the power of sin and the efficacy of divine grace which he was to preach to others. Generally, the Lord's most honored servants, like Samuel, have been chosen from their childhood, and nourished up for their special ministry under the hallowed influence of his truth and worship. Some of them, it is true, were afterward for a while occupied in other callings, before they went to their divinely appointed labor. Moses was a shepherd in the very wilderness through which he was to lead the Lord's beloved, and on the very mountain where he was to receive for them a law from the lips of God. David also was a shepherd, and a musician, and a warrior, and a fugitive, and an outcast from his country; and by all these conditions and experiences was he trained for his future pre-eminence, as the king of Israel, and the psalmist of the sanctuary, and the man after God's own heart. And Chrysostom was a lawyer, and Ambrose was a civilian and a prefect, and Cyprian was a professor of rhetoric, before they entered upon their nobler life-work for Christ and the Church. In all these cases, to which many others might be added, God's good providence wisely ordered the discipline of his servants, through knowledge, and sorrow, and conflict, and a great variety of experiences, out of which were developed those characters and qualities which were essential to their success in the high calling for which they were designed. And so with the holy Baptist, chosen to be the immediate harbinger of the Messiah; and the Galilæan fishermen, whom he afterward ordained as his apostles; and Timothy, appointed the first bishop of Ephesus; and Luther, the destined sword of Heaven to Papal Rome. And so it was with Samuel, from his very birth consecrated to God, growing up in the house of the Lord, becoming the prophet and judge of his people, the invincible champion of truth and righteousness; with such heroic energy maintaining the authority of the divine law, rebuking iniquity in high places, withstanding the current of the national degeneracy, and like an angel of God pronouncing the doom of a fallen monarch, that "all Israel even from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord."

To return to Eli and his sons. The father's fault seems to have been too much indulgence, too much tenderness, perhaps too much timidity, to restrain his consecrated lads from their wicked practices. The power he had, but would not assert it. The father's authority in his family at that age of the world was absolute and unquestionable. This fact leaves Eli's conduct without excuse. He remonstrated with the offenders, but far too feebly. Their crimes were of the very worst character, and aggravated by their sacred profession and holy environments; yet he had for them but a few soft and gentle words, scarcely strong enough to be called a reproof, without any assertion of authority as father, high-priest, or judge. One of our best biblical critics renders the text: "His sons made themselves accursed, and he frowned not upon them."

But while we animadvert upon the guilty negligence of Eli, let no parent plead the different customs of our day, the higher civilization of the race, or the diminished degree of parental

authority, as an excuse for his own delinquency. Every father and mother are responsible for the moral restraint of the children that God has given them, and fearful beyond all estimate must be the consequences of disregarding the duty. Such is the tendency of human nature to evil, that it begins to show itself ordinarily at a very early period of life, and the utmost care should be taken to check it in its first manifestations. For this purpose it may be necessary to interpose the strength of the parental will in curbing the will of the child. Those who are taught from their infancy to submit their own will to the will of father or mother are more likely in later life to yield themselves to the will of God. The wise mother of the Wesleys has left on record these words for our guidance in this important matter: "In order to form the mind of the child, the first thing to be done is to conquer the will and bring it into an obedient temper. This is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after wretchedness and irreligion, and whatever checks and mortifies it promotes their future happiness and piety." Who will presume to question this statement? And if correct, is not Robert Hall's remark equally true—that "indulgent parents are cruel to their children and to posterity"?

But who can calculate the consequences? The fallow ground left unsown is soon sown by the winds with every vagrant seed of evil. One sin leads to another, the less generally to the greater; and by the inception of a single wrong principle in childhood, the young man who might have been a model of virtue becomes a curse to society, and the young woman who ought to have proved a priceless jewel turns out a mere package of dry goods if not something worse. True, these moral wrecks may possibly be recovered by converting grace; but such cases are extremely uncommon, and when they do occur they are regarded as miracles of mercy; and often, alas! the effect is as evanescent as the morning cloud and early dew. Generally, those who have grown up without religious restraint go on still in their trespasses, living without God and dying without hope.

"As in individuals, so in nations," writes the Rev. Charles Kingsley, "unbridled indulgence of the passions must produce, and does produce, frivolity, effeminacy, slavery to the appetite of the moment, a brutalized and reckless temper, before which prudence, energy, national feeling, any and every feeling which is not centred in self, perishes utterly. The old French *noblesse* gave a proof of this law which will last as a warning beacon to the end of time.... It must be so. The national life is grounded on the life of the family, is the development of it; and where the root is corrupt, the tree must be corrupt also." A fearful truth for the contemplation of Christian patriotism! Imagine an utter indifference to the morals of the rising generation all at once to prevail throughout the country, and all efforts for the spiritual culture of the young suddenly to cease; would not the frightful ruin rush over the land with the rapidity of an avalanche and the ubiquity of a deluge, instant and everywhere, in your highways and your byways, at your altars and your hearths, sweeping before it every thing pure and lovely—every thing valuable to existence, precious to recollection, or cheering in the visions of hope?

This side of the subject is not pleasing; let us look at the obverse. No moral maxim is sounder than that of the royal sage: "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The principles of virtue early implanted insure the future saint and hero. A thoroughly good character impressed upon youth cleaves to the man forever.

Exceptions, indeed, there may be—very saddening and disheartening exceptions. It does sometimes happen that those who seem at least to have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord subsequently decline from the way of wisdom and become vicious in their lives. But such cases are too rare to affect the rule. And in these instances, is it not likely that we are deceived often by appearances? May not the religious culture have been radically defective in its principle or culpably incomplete in its process? Was not the child committed to incompetent hands, that marred the character they should have made; or abandoned to the influence of an evil world, and exposed to the contagion of bad example, before his virtuous principles were sufficiently confirmed and fortified? An accurate knowledge of all the facts would no doubt develop some capital defect in the education; would show something essential omitted, or something of evil mingled with the good, some base alloy blended with the pure metal, some infant viper coiled unseen among the buddings and bloomings of spring.

But I have the confidence to affirm that apostasy from the principles of a good Christian education very seldom occurs—so seldom, indeed, that the instances might almost be pronounced anomalous. It is a maxim attested by general if not universal experience, that upon the qualities acquired in childhood depends the character of manhood and old age. Childhood is the period of docility and impressibility, when habits of thought and feeling are formed with the greatest facility; and such habits, once formed, are extremely difficult to destroy; and the good wrought in the soul at that tender age, growing with its growth and strengthening with its strength, is almost invariably retained to the latest hour of life.

Ordinarily, no doubt, we are guided more by habit than by reason. To walk in the old way is much easier than to strike out a new. In this respect, taste follows the same law as thought and action. If the child has formed a taste for virtue, the potent law of habit insures its perpetuity. The virtuous taste prompts to virtuous deeds, and the virtuous deeds confirm the virtuous taste. Thus, by a reflex action, virtue proves its own conservator. Daily the habit grows stronger and

the motive more efficacious. Daily the heart is more and more fortified against the assaults of temptation. Daily the world loses something of its fascination, its false maxims something of their plausibility, its apologies and solicitations something of their persuasive power.

As with the body, so with the spirit. Habitual inaction enfeebles the faculties, and renders their occasional operation inefficient and fruitless. On the contrary, by habitual exercise one becomes capable of performing with ease what were otherwise laborious and difficult, if not quite impossible. Thus the young, accustomed to resist their evil passions, will afterward keep them in due control without any very strenuous struggle; and the seeds of a pure morality, sown in early life, will strike their roots deep into the soil, and spring up in perpetual blossom and fruitage. The person is thenceforth virtuous, not without effort, but certainly with less effort than if he had never accustomed himself to virtue. The habit of virtue has made virtue amiable, and her service becomes a labor of love, her yoke easy and her burden light.

In speaking thus of the power of habit, which has been called "a second nature," I would not exclude from the process of education the agency of divine grace, nor lose sight of it as a necessary factor to the best results. Divine grace, indeed, has much to do with the formation of the habit, and must co-operate with every agency employed in the work. Without divine grace, there is nothing wise, nothing strong, nothing holy; and after all the efforts of parents, pastors, teachers—however great or however small the measure of success attained—we lift our hands to Heaven and sing:—

"Thou all our works in us hast wrought,
Our good is all divine;
The praise of every virtuous thought
And righteous word is thine.

From thee, through Jesus, we receive
The power on thee to call;
In whom we are, and move, and live—
Our God, our all in all."

An infidel objected to sending his little daughter to the Sunday school, "because," said he, "they learn things there which they never forget." The infidel was a philosopher. Knowledge is indestructible. The fact or the principle once acquired is never lost. The soul's past thoughts, feelings, impressions, and operations, are its inalienable property. They are engraven upon an imperishable tablet, and no power can efface the record. Though some parts of our experience may be but dimly and vaguely remembered, and much that we have learned may seem to be irrevocably forgotten, yet the mind is in possession of a law which, when brought into action, will completely restore the entire train of its former phenomena. They are not dead, but sleeping; and we know not what event at some future day may be the trump of their resurrection. The seed that lies buried in the earth through the long and dreary winter will germinate in spring-time and fructify in summer. Therefore let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Christian parents! it is yours to begin at the cradle a work whose blessed influence shall extend beyond the tomb. By the principles you impart to your little ones, you insure the virtue and the Christianity of generations to come; you kindle lights to burn amidst the world's darkness when the faint glimmering of your own is gone; you adorn the living temple of the Lord with pillars of strength and beauty which shall challenge angelic admiration when all the colonnaded glories of earth's capitals are calcined by the fires of doom. To such an achievement, what are all the treasures of monarchs, and all the splendors of empire, and all the applause of heroism, and all the renown of authorship, and all the fascination of eloquence, and all the entrancing power of song?

Who has any fear of God, any love of country, any affection for his children, any regard for the welfare of posterity? By all these I implore you, and by every other consideration that ought to move the heart of man, awake to the work which Heaven enjoins and every instinct of nature urges upon you! Your time, money, knowledge, influence—how can they be better employed than in the Christian culture of the young immortals committed to your care? In the beautiful form you cherish, there is something far more beautiful—a jewel worth immeasurably more than the casket which contains it—a spirit that must live and think and feel when this planet shall have become a chaos, when out of that chaos shall have arisen the new *cosmos* over which Christ is to rule in righteousness forever. Shall this precious thing perish through your faithlessness to so sublime a trust? Shall harps be wanting in heaven, and white-robed ministrants before the throne, through the recreancy of any bearing the Christian name and honored with the title of father or mother? What is reason's estimate of the parental tenderness which provides so laboriously for the body, but totally neglects the soul—which regards so sedulously the interests of time, but utterly overlooks the concerns of eternity? To see your little ones wandering unrestrained in the broad way to ruin, or trained for this world only, as if there were not another beyond—oh! is it not enough to make their guardian angels turn away their faces and weep beneath their wings?

The Church is here to help you, but she requires your co-operation. The Sunday school is here to second your endeavors, but little can that do without your countenance and contribution. Men of Israel, help! Christ calls upon you from his cross to help. Juvenile vice and blasphemy through all your streets seem imploring you to help. Will you respond to the appeal? The result

may be a blessing to your own house. The recollection will warm your heart amidst the chills of death. Sweet little minstrels with crowns shall rehearse the story to you when the cemetery and the sea are delivering up their dead. Not less, perhaps, than the eloquent preacher in the great congregation, the humble teacher of an infant-class may be shedding light into the dark places of the earth—may be scattering flower-seeds and raindrops over the face of the desert. Even more, it may be, than the consecrated minister at the altar of God, the liberal contributor to this beneficent agency is kindling a holy fire which shall burn when the stars have gone out—is touching the strings of a harp that shall send its melodies through eternity. O merciful God! when the seventh trump is sounding, and the quickened dead are gathering before thy throne, let it not be said of any in this assembly—"His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"!

[1] Preached at a Sunday-school convention, 1840.

VI.

JOY OF THE LAW.[1]

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying—If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.—JOHN vii. 37.

At three great annual festivals all the men of all the tribes of Israel were required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem. One of these was the Feast of Tabernacles, kept in commemoration of the sojourn of their fathers in the wilderness, and as a special thanksgiving to God after the ingathering of the autumnal harvest. Its duration was strictly seven days, from the 15th to the 22d of the month Tisri; but it was followed by a day of holy convocation, distinguished by sacrifices and peculiar observances of its own, which was sometimes called the eighth day. During the seven days the people dwelt in booths formed of the branches of the palm, the pine, the olive, the myrtle, and other trees of thick foliage; and these temporary huts lined every street of the city, and covered all the surrounding hills. The public burnt-offerings, and the private peace-offerings as well, were more numerous than those of any other of the great national festivals. The bullocks sacrificed were seventy; but besides these were offered every day two rams, fourteen lambs, and a kid for a sin-offering. The long lines of booths everywhere, and the sacrificial solemnities and processions, must have furnished a grand spectacle by day; and the lamps, the torches, the music, the joyful gatherings in the temple-courts, must have given a still more festive character to the night. No other feast of the Hebrews was half so joyous as the Feast of Tabernacles; and therefore it was eminently fitting that it should be observed, as it was, with much more than its ordinary interest at the dedication of Solomon's Temple, again by Ezra after the restoration of the sacred structure, and a third time by Judas Maccabæus when he had expelled the Syrians and re-established the true worship of Jehovah.

The seven days accomplished, the eighth was ushered in with the glad sound of trumpets, summoning the multitudes to the holy convocation. During the seven days they had offered sacrifices for the seventy nations of the earth, as well as for themselves; the eighth was Israel's own day, and the sacrifices offered were exclusively for the people of the covenant, adding to the daily offerings already mentioned a bullock, a ram, seven lambs, and a goat for a sin-offering. As soon as the morning trumpets sounded, the booths were all dismantled, and the thronging thousands from every quarter hastened to the temple. The sacrifice was already on the altar, and the high-priest stood by in his more than regal array, with his numerous white-robed ministers. A priestly procession entered at the Water-gate, bringing water in a golden vessel from the neighboring Pool of Siloam. Approaching the altar, the bearer ascended the sacred slope, and delivered his burden into the hands of the high-priest; while the trumpets sent forth a joyous peal, to which the people responded with a shout that shook the city. Part of the water, mingled with wine, was then poured into the grooves of the altar around the morning sacrifice, and the rest was distributed among the attendant priests, who drank it amidst the grateful acclamations of the multitude; and finally the great choir, chanting to every instrument of music, poured forth the song of Isaiah—"With joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation!" This was called "the Joy of the Law;" and there is a rabbinical proverb to the effect, that he who has never witnessed it has never seen rejoicing. It was intended as a commemoration of the miracle of the smitten rock in Horeb, which the apostle tells us prefigured Christ; and it must have been just after this grand solemnity, or in connection with its impressive evening compline, that "Jesus stood and cried, saying—If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Here are four things full of instruction for us—the time, the speaker, the manner, and the

invitation. In these we shall find the very marrow of the gospel, worth more to our souls than all the revelations of science and all the speculations of philosophy. Let us give them earnest and devout attention, and may God grant us the aid of his grace!

First, the time is to be noticed. "In the last day, that great day of the feast"—when there was present a vast concourse of the people. Three million have been counted in attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles. What an audience, what an inspiration, for an orator! How would Cicero have triumphed before such an assembly! Jesus needed no such impulse. His mind was ever full of light, his heart overflowing with love. He wanted but the opportunity to pour forth his divine speech upon the people, and surely he never had a better than now. How did his doctrine distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and the showers upon the grass! Great lesson for his servants, who ought to make their Master their model, and let no good occasion slip for pouring the light of life into benighted souls!

"In the last day, that great day of the feast"—when they were occupied with the most interesting observances of the national solemnity. Another might have said: "They will not hear me; they are too much absorbed to listen." Jesus was a better philosopher. Conscious of his own power, he knew perfectly the hearts of men. Never could his hearers recall the Joy of the Law, without recollecting the voice, the figure, the beaming countenance, of the strange young rabbi from Galilee, who stood forth in the midst of the great congregation, and dropped such heavenly words into their hearts. "Who was he? What meant he? Could any mere mortal have spoken so? Is the Messiah at length come? Let us seek him again, and hear more from those marvellous lips!" Another grand lesson for his servants, who ought to study to environ their teachings with associations which cannot fail, with every happy hour, by every happy memory, to recall the truths they have uttered and revive the impressions produced by their preaching.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast"—when the pleasant season was drawing to its close, and the people were ready to disperse and return to their respective homes. The last words of a dear departing friend linger long in the memory. The last utterances of a dying father or mother cannot soon be effaced from the mind of the child. The last sermon of a loved and honored pastor, before he leaves us to feed another flock, may impress us more profoundly than any thing he ever said to us before. The mere fact that it is the last time, that we may never see that face again, never again hear that familiar voice, brings home the truth with a vivid power, which can hardly fail to make it effective, even with those who have hitherto heard with indifference. Many who are now listening to our Lord will never listen to him again. Before another Feast of Tabernacles they may be in their graves, or he in heaven. To some present he may have preached many sermons, but will never preach another. It is their last opportunity, which seals up their account to the judgment. How must the thought have wrought upon a mind like his! what earnestness given to every word! what tenderness to every tone! Touching lesson again for us, my brethren! who ought to preach every Lord's Day as if it were our last! as if Death stood beside us saying—"Shoot thou God's arrows, and I will shoot mine!" as if the peal of doom were already ringing in our ears, and the graves around us delivering up their dead!

Next, the speaker is to be observed. It is Jesus, the Saviour, heralded by prophets, escorted by angels, proclaimed by the Eternal Father with an audible voice from heaven. A divine teacher, he comes to preach the acceptable year of the Lord—an incarnation of the Father's love, to unfold the secrets of the Father's heart to sinners, and make known the purpose of his tender mercy in their salvation. Throughout Galilee, and Judæa, and some of the neighboring provinces, he has already gone, preaching the kingdom of heaven and calling the people to repentance. He speaks as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Everywhere miracles attest his mission, and demonstrate his doctrine. The wisdom of his words is too much for the cunning sophistry of his enemies, and an eloquence of sublime simplicity forces conviction upon unwilling minds and takes the hearts of thousands captive. And now, in the temple, on one of the most popular occasions of religious worship and festivity, he is speaking to the people of things pertaining to their eternal peace. Can any who hear him ever forget those gracious utterances? "Happy souls!" methinks I hear you say, "happy souls, to have listened to such a teacher! Could I have been there! Could I have heard but once for half an hour! How eagerly would I have listened! how gladly responded to his invitation!"

Alas, my friends! how our own hearts deceive us! Had we been present, we should probably have done very much as most of the Jews did, and some of us might have shown still greater blindness of mind or hardness of heart. Have we not to-day the same gospel preached to us? Are not those who occupy our pulpits the accredited ambassadors of Christ? Is it not his word they speak, his claims they urge, his love they proclaim, and his salvation they offer? And how receive we the message and respond to the demand? With hearty faith, and grateful tears, and earnest obedience? Nay, do not many of us despise our own mercy, and reject the gracious counsel of God, not knowing the day of our visitation? Even we who profess faith in Christ and call ourselves his disciples—are we made wiser and better by the weekly recurrence of the blessed opportunity? "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Every gospel sermon delivered to us is a message from the throne of heaven. It is as if Christ every Sunday morning descended afresh from the Father, and stood before us in the pulpit, and stretched forth to us the hands once nailed to the shameful cross; with many amplifications and additional arguments repeating what he said in the temple on "the last day—that great day of the feast." "See, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall

not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Thirdly, the manner is to be considered. "Jesus stood and cried." The attitude is instructive. Jewish teachers generally sat. So did Jesus on the Mount. Here he stands—stands ready to bestow—stands ready to depart. Ready to bestow, he is ever standing—more ready to bestow than we to receive. Delighting in mercy, he waits to be gracious. All the day long he stretches out inviting hands to the perishing. All the night he lingers with dew-sprinkled locks at the door. Now, if ever, is the accepted time; now, if ever, the day of salvation. While Jesus waits, there is hope for the worst. But he who stands may soon depart. Mercy is limited by justice. Probation is bounded by destiny. If we heed not its compassionate plea, even love must leave us, hopelessly hardened in our sin. Jerusalem rejected her Messiah, and perished in spite of his tears. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

"Jesus stood and cried." This last word is suggestive. The orator much in earnest speaks loudly. Demosthenes thundered from the *bema*. Cicero's speech rang like a trumpet-call through the forum. One Hebrew prophet in his commission is directed to cry aloud, spare not, lift up his voice like a trumpet. Another, pre-announcing the Messianic mercy, like one who has found a spring in the desert and shouts to his comrades of the caravan, sends out his call upon the wind: "Ho! every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters!" Had Jesus desired to limit his salvation to a few unconditionally elected favorites, would he not have restricted the invitation? With such a policy, walking quietly through the crowd, seeking out his elect here and there, calling them privately in undertones to their peculiar privilege, would certainly seem to have been in better keeping than an indiscriminating stentorian cry from a conspicuous position to the multitude. But, intending the mercy for all, he offers it to all. Does he mock them with an invitation which is insincere? Oh! better we know the love divine! The water of life is not the private property of a churl, streaming from a statue in a little park, surrounded by a lofty granite wall, with an iron gate locked against the public, while a few favored individuals, as selfish as himself, are furnished each with a key; but an open fountain in the field, without inclosure or obstruction, clearer than the Clitumnus and more copious than the San Antonio, issuing like the outlet of a subterranean ocean from the base of the everlasting hills; while the Son of God, more glorious than the morn upon the mountains, stands over it crying with voice that reaches every nation: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!"

Finally, the invitation is to be regarded. Who here is not athirst? Some thirst for riches, some for honors, some for pleasures, a few perhaps—may grace enlarge the number—for the water of salvation. Gold cannot satisfy the soul; the more we have, the more we crave. The world has not enough of glory in its gift to fill the aching voids of ambition; elevation evokes aspiration, and at the last summit the cry is still "Excelsior!" One after another, all sensuous enjoyments pall upon the taste; and fluttering like butterflies from flower to flower, and sipping like honey-bees every sweet of field and forest, we learn at length with a sated Solomon that all is vanity. The gilding of an empty cup can never satisfy the thirsty soul. "We were made for God," says St. Augustine, "and our hearts are restless till they repose in him." For God, even the living God, David thirsted long ago; and here, incarnate in our nature, stands the Divine Object of his desire, crying to the world: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!"

But there is something, see you not? for the thirsty soul to do. Christ cannot save us till we come. He is indeed, as St. Paul calls him, "the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe"—of all men, because he has opened the fountain for all and invited all to the fountain—especially of them that believe, because they accept the invitation and come to him for supply. Whoever, whatever, wherever you are—however great your obstructions, and however numerous and enormous your sins—called, you may come; coming, you will receive; receiving, you shall be satisfied forever. "Rivers of living water," Jesus offers every believer in him. See the adaptation—"water"—to assuage your thirst, to refresh the weary soul, to revive him who is fainting and dying. Observe the quality—"living water"—not a stagnant pool, but a salient spring, a fountain that never fails, a well of water within springing up unto everlasting life. Behold the abundance—"rivers of living water"—not one great stream, but many—an inexhaustible supply, having its source in a shoreless and unfathomable sea—

"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough forevermore!"

But the coming is not all. Come and what? Come and see? Come and explore? Come and investigate? Come and analyze the water, and discuss its qualities, and speculate about its probable effects? Come and praise the fountain, and commend it to others, and enjoy its cool retreats, and admire its beautiful environs, and congratulate your friends upon its conveniences, and applaud the benevolence that opened it for the benefit of all? Nay, come and drink. Not all the water from the smitten rock could save the Israelite that would not drink. Not all the river of the water of life flowing through the City of God can quench the thirst of the soul that declines it. Personally you must appropriate the mercy. Personally you must experience its restoring power. Salvation is not a theory, but a fact; not a speculation, but a consciousness; not an ethical system

to be reasoned out by superior intellect, but a divine blessing to be taken into the believing heart. It is a new life received from the Fountain-Life of the world. Gushing from the throne of God and the Lamb, "clear as crystal," with a copiousness and an energy which no dam can stay nor dike restrain, it offers its refreshment to all, free as the air, the dew, the rain, or the sunlight of heaven. Drink, and you shall never thirst again. Drink, and find your immortality in the draught!

[1] Preached in Rochester, N.Y., 1842.

VII.

SOJOURNING WITH GOD.[1]

Ye are strangers and sojourners with me.—LEV. xxv. 23.

I have a dear friend to-day on the Atlantic. Four days ago, in New-York Harbor, I accompanied him to the floating palace that bears him to Europe; and put a book into his hand, which may furnish him some entertainment on the voyage, and some service perhaps in the land of art and beauty for which he is bound. Next Lord's Day he hopes to spend in London; and thence, after a short pause, to proceed to Rome, where he means to remain three months or more. A summer in that city is to an American somewhat hazardous on the score of health, and the facilities for seeing and exploring are far less favorable than they are in the winter. Yet, as this is the only season he can command for the purpose, he is willing to encounter the dangers and dispense with some of the advantages, for the sake of a brief sojourn in the grand old metropolis that dominated the world in the days of the Cæsars, and has since ruled it with a rod of iron in the hands of the popes.

In "the historic city" he will meet with much to entertain a mind like his—highly cultivated and richly stored with classic lore; and for all that he wishes to accomplish, he will find his opportunity far too brief. But he will not be at home there—a transient and unsettled visitor. Every thing will be different from what he has been accustomed to in his own country—government different—society different—manners and customs different—churches and worship different—dress, diet and language different—architecture, public institutions, general aspect of the city, and natural scenery on all sides, quite different from any thing he ever saw before. And while he daily encounters new objects of absorbing interest—new wonders of art—new treasures of antiquity—new illustrations and confirmations of history, and feels the charm of a thousand beauties to which he has not been accustomed, the very contrast will make him confess that he is a stranger and sojourner, and think frequently of his home beyond the sunset, and sigh for the fellowship of the dear hearts far over the western sea.

And should he go farther, and visit the ruined lands of the Nile—the Jordan—the Euphrates, and wander over the silent wastes that once smiled with golden harvests, glowed with gorgeous cities, and teemed with tumultuous populations; everywhere—on the burning sands of the desert—in the savage solitudes of the mountains—amidst the crumbling memorials of ancient civilizations and religions—in the tent of the Arab, the wayside encampment, and the comfortless caravansera—he will constantly require the pledge of chieftains, the protection of princes, the safe conduct of governments, and the covenanted friendship of the rude nomadic tribes among whom he makes his temporary abode.

This is the idea of our text: "Ye are strangers and sojourners with me." It is God speaking to his chosen people, about to take possession of the promised land, instructing them concerning their polity and conduct in their new home and relations. One of the specific directions given them is, that they are not to sell the land forever, because it belongs to him, and they are his wards—tenants at will, dwelling on his domain, under his patronage and protection. For six years he leased to them the land, so to say; but every seventh year he reclaimed it as his own, and it was to be neither tilled nor sown; and after seven such sabbatic years, in the fiftieth year, which was the year of Jubilee, every thing reverted with a still more special emphasis to the divine Proprietor; and the people were not permitted to reap or gather any thing that grew of itself that year even from the unworked soil, but were to subsist on the product of the former years laid up in store for that purpose. All this to teach them that the domain was Jehovah's, and they were only privileged occupants under him—that he was their patron, protector, benefactor, while they were strangers and sojourners with God.

In a general sense, these sacred words describe the condition of all men. All live by sufferance on the Lord's estate, fed and sustained by his bounty. Whether we recognize his rights and claims or not, all we have belongs to him, and the continuance of every privilege depends upon his will. You may revolt against his authority, and fret at what you call fate; but his providence orders all, and death is only your eviction from the trust and tenure you have abused. What is your life, and what control has any man over his destiny? A shadow on the ground, a vapor in the air, an arrow speeding to the mark, an eagle hasting to the prey, a post hurrying past with despatches, a swift ship gliding out of sight over the misty horizon—these are the Scripture emblems of what we are. Every day is but a new stage in the pilgrim's progress—every act and every pulse another step toward the tomb. The frequent changes of fortune teach us that nothing here is certain but uncertainty, nothing constant but inconstancy, nothing real but unreality, nothing stable but instability. The loveliest spot we ever found on earth is but a halting-place for the traveller—an oasis for the caravan in the desert. The world itself, and all that it contains, present only the successive scenes of a moving panorama; and our life is the passage of a weaver's shuttle—a flying to and fro—a mere coming and going—an entry and an exit. For we are strangers and sojourners with God.

But what is in a general sense thus true of all, is in a special sense true of the spiritual and heavenly-minded. As Abraham was a stranger and a sojourner with the Canaanite and the Egyptian—as Jacob and his sons were strangers and sojourners with Pharaoh, and the fugitive David with the king of Gath—so all godly people acknowledge themselves strangers and sojourners with God. This is the picture of the Christian life that better than almost any other expresses the condition and experiences of our Lord's faithful followers—not at home here—ever on the move—living among aliens and enemies—subject to many privations and occasional persecutions—every morning hearing afresh the summons, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest"—practically confessing, with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." The world knew not their Master, and knows not them. If they were of the world, the world would love its own; because they are not of the world, but he has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them. Wholly of another character—another profession—another pursuit—aiming at other ends, and cheered by other hopes—the carnal, selfish, unbelieving world cannot possibly appreciate them, and they are constantly misunderstood and misrepresented by the world. Regarding not the things which are seen and temporal, but the things which are unseen and eternal, they are often stigmatized as fools and denounced as fanatics. Far distant from their home, and surrounded by those who have no sympathy with them, they show their heavenly citizenship by heavenly tempers, heavenly manners, heavenly conversation, all hallowed by the spirit of holiness. So one of the Fathers in the second century describes the Christians of his time:

"They occupy their own native land, but as pilgrims in it. They bear all as citizens, and forbear all as foreigners. Every foreign land is to them a fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. They are in the flesh, but they walk not after the flesh. They live on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They die, but with death their true life begins. Poor themselves, they make many rich; destitute, they have all things in abundance; despised, they are glorified in contempt. In a word—what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world. The soul inhabits the body, but is not derived from it; and Christians dwell in the world, but are not of it. The immortal soul sojourns in a mortal tent; and Christians inhabit a perishable house, while looking for an imperishable in heaven."

To such heavenly-mindedness, my dear brethren, we all are called; and without something of this spirit, whatever our professions and formalities, we do but belie the name of Christian. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, on the right hand of God; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

Bowed down with many a burden and weary because of the way, how much is there to cheer and comfort us in God's good word to his suffering pilgrims—"Ye are strangers and sojourners with me"!

There is the idea of friendly recognition. As the nomad chief receives the tourist into his tent, and assures him of his favor by the "covenant of salt;" so God hath made with us an everlasting covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure; since which, he can never disown us, never forsake us, never forget us, never cease to care for his own.

There is the idea of pleasant communion. As in the Arab tent, between the sheik and his guest, there is a free interchange of thought and feeling; so between God and the regenerate soul a sweet fellowship is established, with perfect access and unreserved confidence. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," and his delight is in his saints, who are the excellent of the earth.

There is the idea of needful refreshment. "Turn in and rest a little," saith the patriarch to the wayfarers; and then brings forth bread and wine—the best that his store affords—to cheer their

spirits and revive their strength. God spreads a table for his people in the wilderness. With angels' food he feeds them, and their cup runs over with blessing. He gives them to eat of the hidden manna, and restores their fainting souls with the new wine of the kingdom.

There is the idea of faithful protection. The Arab who has eaten with you will answer for your safety with his own life, and so long as you remain with him none of his tribe shall harm a hair of your head. Believer in Jesus! do you not dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty? Has he not shut you, like Noah, into the ark of your salvation? Is not David's rock your rock, your fortress, your high tower, and unfailing city of refuge?

There is the idea of infallible guidance. The Oriental host will not permit his guest to set forth alone, but goes with him on every new track, grasps his hand in every steep ascent, and holds him back from the brink of every precipice. God said to Israel: "I will send my angel before thy face, to lead thee in the way, and bring thee into the land whither thou goest." Yea, he said more: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Both promises are ours, my brethren; and something better than the pillar of cloud and fire, or the manifest glory of the resident God upon the mercy-seat, marches in the van of his pilgrim host through the wilderness, and will never leave us till the last member of his redeemed Israel shall have passed clean over Jordan!

There is the idea of a blessed destiny. Their divine Guide is leading them "to a good land, that floweth with milk and honey"—"to a city of habitation"—"a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"—"a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens"—the Father's house of "many mansions," where Christ is now as he promised preparing a place for his people, and where they are at last to be with him and behold his glory. Oh! with what a sweet and restful confidence should we dismiss our groundless fears of the future, saying with the psalmist—"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory!" The pilgrim has a home; the weary has a resting-place; the wanderer in the wilderness is a "fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of faith;" and often have we seen him in the evening twilight, after a long day's march over stony mountain and sultry plain, sitting at the door of the tent just pitched for the night, with calm voice singing:

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er—
I'm nearer to my home to-night
Than e'er I was before—
Nearer the bound of life,
Where falls my burden down—
Nearer to where I leave my cross,
And where I take my crown!"

and with the next rising sun, like a giant refreshed with new wine, joyfully resuming his journey, from the first eminence attained gazing a moment through his glass at the distant glory of the gold-and-crystal city, then bounding forward and making the mountains ring with the strain:

"There is my house and portion fair,
My treasure and heart are there,
And my abiding home;
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come!"

The saintly Monica, after many years of weeping at the nail-pierced feet, has at length received the answer to her prayers in the conversion of one dearer to her than life; and is now ready, with good old Simeon, to depart in peace, having seen the salvation of the Lord: "As for me, my son, nothing in this world hath longer any charm for me. What I do here, or why I should remain, I know not. But one wish I had, and that God has abundantly granted me. Bury me where thou wilt, for nowhere am I far from God!"

Dark to some of you, O ye strangers and sojourners with God! may be the valley of the shadow of death; but ye cannot perish there, for He whose fellowship is immortality is still with you, and you shall soon be with him as never before! Black and cold at your feet rolls the river of terrors; but lift your eyes a little, and you see gleaming through the mist the pearl-gates beyond! There "the Captain of the Lord's host" is already preparing your escort!

"Even now is at hand
The angelical band—
The convoy attends—
An invincible troop of invisible friends!
Ready winged for their flight
To the regions of light,
The horses are come—
The chariots of Israel to carry us home!"

VIII.

BUILDING FOR IMMORTALITY.[1]

So they built and prospered.—2 CHRON. xiv. 7.

In the fairest of Italian cities stands the finest of terrestrial structures—a campanile or bell-tower, twenty-five feet square, two hundred and seventy-three feet high, built of white and colored marble in alternate blocks, covered with a royal luxuriance of sculpture framed in medallions, studded everywhere with the most beautiful statuary disposed in Gothic niches, and finished from base to battlement like a lady's cabinet inlaid with pearl and gold. It would seem as if nothing more perfect in symmetry, more exquisite in workmanship, or more magnificent in ornamentation, could possibly be achieved by human genius. Pure as a lily born of dew and sunshine, the approaching tourist sees it rising over the lofty roof of the Duomo, like the pillar of cloud upon the tabernacle; and when he enters the Piazza, and finds it standing apart in its majestic altitude, and looking down upon the vestal loveliness of the Tuscan Santa Maria, he can think only of the Angel of the Annunciation in the presence of the Blessed Virgin. Whoever has gazed upon its grand proportions, and studied the details of its exquisite execution, will feel no astonishment at being told that such a structure could not now be built in this country for less than fifty millions of our money; nor will he wonder that Jarvis, in his "Art Hints," has pronounced it "the noblest specimen of tower-architecture the world has to show;" that Charles the Fifth declared it was "fit to be inclosed with crystal, and exhibited only on holy-days;" and that the Florentines themselves, whenever they would characterize any thing as extremely beautiful, say it is "as fine as the Campanile."

Gentlemen, you have reared a nobler edifice! Nobler, not because more costly, for your pecuniary outlay is as nothing in the comparison. Nobler, not because the material is more precious, and the architecture more perfect; for what is a pile of brick to such a miracle in marble? or where is the American builder that would dream of competing with Giotto? Nobler, not because there is a larger and richer-toned bell in the gilded cupola, to summon the inmates to study and recitation, or to morning and evening worship; for the great bell of the Campanile is one of the grandest pieces of resonant metal ever cast; and its voice, though soft as flute-tones at eventide coming over the water, is rich and majestic as an angel's song. Far nobler, however, in its purpose and utility; for that wonder of Italian architecture is the product of Florentine pride and vanity in the days of a prosperous republic—a less massive but more elegant Tower of Babel, expressing the ambition of its builders; and though standing in the Cathedral Piazza, its chief conceivable objects are mere show and sound; while the end and aim of this edifice is the development of mind, the formation of character, the creation of a loftier intellectual manhood, the reproduction of so much of the lost image of God as may be evolved by the best media and methods of human education.

The excellence of your structure, then, consists mainly in this—that it is only a scaffold, with derricks, windlasses, and other apparatus and implements, for building something immeasurably more excellent. Here the thinking power is to be quickened, and the logical faculty is to be awakened and invigorated. This is to be effected, not so much by the knowledge acquired, as by the effort called out for its acquisition. The teacher is to measure his success, not by the number and variety of terms, rules, formulas and principles he has impressed upon the memory, but by the amount of mental power and independence he has imparted to his pupil. True, in educating the mind, knowledge of some sort must be acquired; but the thoroughness of the education depends no more upon the quantity of the acquisition, than the health of the guest upon the abundance of the banquet. The mental food, as well as the material, must be digested and assimilated. It follows that those exercises which require close and consecutive thinking, thorough analysis, clear discrimination and accurate definition, are best adapted to develop the higher faculties of the mind. Mathematics, metaphysics, dialectics and philology must form the granite basis of your building, sustaining the solid tiers of rich and varied marbles.

Then comes the æsthetic culture. First the substantial, afterward the ornamental—this is the natural order, to reverse which were to begin building the tower at the top. The very idea of the ornamental supposes something substantial to be ornamented. No man will attempt to polish the sponge, or paint a picture on the vacant air, or rear a stone cathedral on a sunset cloud. There is no lily-bloom without the sustaining stalk, nor magnolia grandiflora without the sturdy and stately tree. "Wood, hay, stubble," are not fit materials for jewelry; but "gold, silver, precious stones," may be wrought into a thousand forms of beauty, sparkling with myriad splendors. The

solid marble superstructure resting upon its deep foundations of granite, firm as the seated hills, can scarcely be too finely finished or too sumptuously adorned. Upon a thorough mental culture sit gracefully, and quite at home, philosophy, history, poetry, eloquence, music, painting—all in literature and the arts that can refine the taste, refresh the heart, and lead the fancy captive. To the mind thus disciplined and adorned, a pleasant path is opened to the broadest and richest fields of intellectual inquiry, where it may range at will with the freedom of an angel's wing, charmed with beauties such as Eden never knew, thrilled with melodies such as the leaden ear of ignorance never heard, rejoicing in a fellowship of wisdom worthy of the enfranchised sons of God, and realizing the truth so finely expressed by the greatest of German poets:—

"Only through beauty's morning gate,
Canst thou to knowledge penetrate;
The mind, to face truth's higher glances,
Must swim some time in beauty's trances;
The heavenly harping of the muses,
Whose sweetest trembling through thee rings,
A higher life into thy soul infuses,
And wings it upward to the soul of things."

But is there not something still better, which ought to be an element in every process of human education? What is man? Merely an intellectual animal? Nay, but he has a spirit within him allied to angels and to God. The higher nature calls for culture no less than the lower. To the development and discipline of the rational and æsthetic faculties must be subjoined "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Otherwise we educate only the inferior part of the man, and leave the superior to chance and the Devil. Make scholars of your children, but do not omit to make them Christians. Lead them to Parnassus, but let them go by the way of Calvary. Conduct them to Olympus, but let them carry the dew of Olivet upon their sandals. Make them drink deeply from the wells of human wisdom, but deny them not the living water whereof if one drink he shall never thirst again.

Why should a "wise master-builder" hesitate to connect religion with science and literature in the edification and adornment of the soul? Does not religion favor the most thorough mental discipline and contribute to the harmonious development of all the spiritual powers? Does not Christianity stimulate the mind to struggle against difficulties, ennoble the struggle by investing it with the dignity of a duty, and render the duty delightful by the hope of a heavenly reward? "Knowledge is power;" but what knowledge is so mighty as that which Christ brought from the bosom of the Father? Poetry and philosophy have their charms; but what poetry is like that of the Holy Spirit, and what philosophy like that of redeeming love? God's holy evangel enlarges and strengthens the mind by bringing it into contact with the sublimest truths, and making it familiar with the profoundest mysteries. It rectifies our perverted reason, corrects our erroneous estimates, silences the imperious clamour of the passions, and removes the stern embargo which the corrupt heart lays upon the aspiring intellect. It sings us the sweetest songs, preaches to us the purest morality, and presents for our imitation the noblest examples of beneficence and self-denial. Under its blessed influence the soul expands to grasp the thought of God and receive the infinite riches of his love.

And shall we wrong our sons and daughters by withholding from them this noblest agency of the higher mental and spiritual culture—

"The fountain-light of all our day,
The master-light of all our seeing"—

and turn them over, with all their instinctive yearnings after the true, the good, the pure, the divine, to the blind guidance of a sceptical sciolism, and the bewildering vagaries of a rationalistic infidelity? "No," to use the language of the late Canon Melville, "we will not yield the culture of the understanding to earthly husbandmen; there are heavenly ministers who water it with a choicer dew, and pour upon it the beams of a brighter sun, and prune its branches with a kinder and more skilful hand. We will not give up the reason to stand always as a priestess at the altars of human philosophy; she hath a more majestic temple to tread, and more beautiful robes to walk in, and incense rarer and more fragrant to offer in golden censers. She does well when boldly exploring God's visible works; she does better when she submits to spiritual teaching, and sits with Mary at the Saviour's feet."

Gentlemen, it is impossible to overstate the importance of religious culture in the work of education. Every interest of time and eternity urges it upon your attention. Your children are accountable and immortal creatures. "Give them divine truth," says Channing, "and you give them more than gems and gold; give them Christian principles, and you give them more than thrones and diadems; imbue their hearts with a love of virtue, and you enrich them more than by laying worlds at their feet." Your doctrine may distil as the dew upon the grass, and as the small rain upon the tender herb; but in some future emergency of life, the silent influence shall assert itself in a might more irresistible than the stormy elements when they go forth to the battles of God. If the work be faithfully done, the impression produced shall not be that of the sea-fowl on the sand, effaced by the first wave of the rising tide; but the enduring grooves cut by the chariot-wheels of the King of Trembling as he rides through the mountain ranges, and the footprints of his fiery steeds left deep in the everlasting rocks.

Forward, then, with your noble endeavor! You are building for eternity. You are rearing temples of living stones which shall survive all the changes and chances of earth and time, and look sublimely down upon the world's catastrophe. Up! up with your immortal campanile! It is compacted of imperishable gems, cemented with gold from the mines of God. No marble sculpture may adorn its niches and cornices; but angel forms shall walk its battlements in robes of living glory. No hollow metal may swing in its vaulted *loggie*, sending sweet echoes over the distant hills, and charming the song-birds to silence along the flowery Val d'Arno; but richer and holier melodies, ringing out from its heavenly altitudes, shall mingle with the music of the spheres, and swell the many-voiced harmony of the City of God!

[1] Preached at the opening of a new college edifice, 1859.

IX.

WAIL OF BEREAVEMENT.[1]

Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.—JOB xix. 21.

Nothing is more important, yet few things are more difficult, than the proper control of our spirits in the time of trouble. There are two extremes to be avoided; stoicism and despondency. Stoicism feels too little; despondency, too much. The former hardens the heart; the latter breaks down the spirit. The one is a want of sensibility; the other, a lack of fortitude. This is an affected contempt of suffering; that, a practical abandonment of hope. Midway between the two lies the path of duty and happiness. St. Paul, quoting from King Solomon, warns us against them both: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord"—that is stoicism; "neither faint when thou art rebuked of him"—that is despondency. Israel is charged with the former: "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; they have made their faces harder than a rock." Job fell into the latter: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

No piece of history is more affecting than that of the perfect man of Uz. For the trial of his fortitude and his fidelity, the Almighty delivered him up, with certain restrictions, into the hand of Satan. The Sabeans and the Chaldæans robbed him of his oxen, his asses, and his camels, and slew his servants with the edge of the sword. Fire from heaven consumed his flocks in the field, and all his children perished together in a tempest. He was smitten "with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown; and he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes." His wife, the last on earth that ought to have been unkind to him, assailed him with bitter mockery; saying, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die!" Three friends, more faithful than the rest, came from afar to see and console him in his sufferings; and when they beheld the greatness of his grief they sat down with him in speechless astonishment; and surely that seven days' silence was better than any words of condolence they could have spoken. But when "Job opened his mouth and cursed his day," and related the sad story of all his troubles, they too became his censors, charging him with hypocrisy, and secret wickedness, and oppression of the poor and needy. These allegations stung him to the heart. Oh! was it not enough that God had forsaken him; that Satan had assailed him with all his weapons; that predatory bands had stripped him of his possessions; that the elements of nature had conspired against his prosperity; that his seven sons and three daughters had been taken from him in one day; that his body had become a mass of putrid disease, a loathsome living death; and that the wife of his youth looked upon him no more with affection, but treated him with cold indifference or haughty scorn? Must these wise and excellent men, the last friends left to him, join the cruel mockery, and accuse the upright of oppression, impiety, and every evil work? "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" The good man's heart is crushed; he is ready to give up all for lost; and he pours forth his whole soul in this passionate appeal: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

It is permitted us to complain under such afflictions, provided we do not "charge God foolishly." There is no guilt in tears, if they are not tears of despair. It is no crime to feel our loss. Insensibility is no virtue—has no merit—wins no reward. Religion does not destroy nature, but regulates it; does not remove sorrow, but sanctifies it; does not cauterize the human heart, but enables us to "rejoice evermore," and teaches us to "glory in tribulations also." Abraham mourned

for Sarah; Joseph mourned for Jacob; David mourned for Jonathan, and even for wicked Absalom; "devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him;" and Jesus, the pattern "Man of sorrows," groaned in spirit, and wept at the grave of Lazarus. These chastisements are intended for our improvement; but if they are not felt, their end is not realized. If we have no sense of the stroke, how shall we submit to the hand that smites us? If our hearts are seared against all painful impressions, God is defeated in the purpose of his providence, and the best means of our salvation prove ineffectual; for he that is not sensible of his affliction will continue secure in his sin. The loss of one who is very dear to us—a husband and father, upon whom we depend so much for counsel, support, protection and happiness—must inflict a very deep wound; and who shall forbid that wound to bleed? None may say to the widow, "Weep not;" but He that can also say to the dead, "Young man, arise." Grief must have vent, or it will break the heart. Tears must flow, or they will fester in their fountains. It is cruel to deny one the relief of mourning, when mourning is so often its own relief. Sorrow calls for sympathy. Compassion is better than counsel. It is a great alleviation, when we can pour out our grief into another's bosom. Sympathy divides the sorrow, and leaves but half the load. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." This is what the troubled patriarch longed for, but could not find. His kindred were estranged from him, and all his inward friends abhorred him: his servants responded not to his call, and the wife of his bosom regarded him as an alien. No wonder that he exclaims, as if his heart were breaking, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

But it is better to complain to God than to man. He will appreciate my complaint He knoweth my heart. He seeth my sincerity. He pitieth me with more than a father's pity. His word can still the storm and calm the sea. His look can turn my darkness into light. He hath invited me to call upon him in the day of trouble, adding, "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." He hath said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The apostle saith, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." David saith, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path." There is a psalm—the CII.—on purpose for the afflicted, and this is its title: "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." The afflicted may complain; when he is overwhelmed he may complain even unto the Lord; yea, he may pour out his complaint before him, as one poureth out water; and here is an inspired formula of woe which he may employ in the divine presence without fear of extravagance or impropriety. Sorrow sometimes renders one speechless: "I am so troubled," saith David, "that I cannot speak." Oh! what a relief when we can empty our anguish into the ear and the heart of God! Such prayer is not incompatible with perfect submission to the divine will. "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;" dumb as it respects murmuring, but not as it respects prayer, for the next words are, "Remove thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of thy hand." Jesus in Gethsemane exhibits a pattern of perfect submission joined with fervent prayer. He "prayed earnestly," "in an agony," "with strong crying and tears;" thrice prostrating himself upon the ground; thrice imploring the Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but as often adding, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

Oh! yes; you may complain, in the spirit of pious subordination; but you ought to guard against the excess of sorrow. To grieve too much were as great an evil as not to grieve at all. Where, then, is the proper limit, and when does sorrow become excessive, and therefore sinful? I answer:

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it renders you unmindful of your remaining mercies. It might be much worse with you than it is. You have forfeited all your comforts, yet God has withdrawn but few of them. Are those that remain worth nothing to you because others have been removed? Will you relish the less the fruit that is left, because some of it was blighted by untimely frost? You should set the higher value upon what you have, and enjoy the blessing with a grateful heart.

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it causes you to forget the grief of others. You are not the only sufferer in the world, nor is there any thing very peculiar in your afflictions. Thousands have experienced similar troubles, losses, bereavements. Some have parted with more than husband and father—have lost all at once, and are left to tread the dreary earth alone. You are doubtless acquainted with many with whom you would not now exchange conditions. And can you be so selfish as to forget all griefs but your own?

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it makes you indifferent to the public welfare. Poor old Eli was less afflicted by the death of his two sons than by the loss of the ark of the Lord, because with that was so intimately connected the prosperity of his people, the object dearest to his heart. A Spartan mother, who had five sons in the battle, stood at the gate of the city when a messenger came with tidings. "How prospers the fight?" she inquired. "Thy five sons are slain," answered the messenger. "I did not ask after my sons," replied the patriotic woman, "but how prospers the fight?" "We have won the day," said the other, "and Sparta is safe." "Then let us be thankful to the gods," exclaimed the inquirer, "for our continued freedom." Her private griefs were swallowed up in her concern for the public good.

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it disqualifies you for the duties of your

position.

"Nothing in nature, much less conscious being,
Was e'er created solely for itself."

You live for others. Your friends have claims upon you. Your families and fellow-citizens require your beneficent activities. You cannot cast off this responsibility. It is written in your inmost nature. It is interwoven with the very constitution of human society. Wherefore the noble faculty of speech, the high prerogative of reason, the sweet flow of domestic sympathies, and the congregation of men in communities, with statutes and civil compacts, and distinctions of rank and office? All these indicate your duty to the human brotherhood; and if you grieve so as to unfit yourselves for that duty, you defeat the end of the divine benevolence.

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it blinds you to the grand purposes of Providence. Poor Job saith, "My soul is weary of my life," and again and again he desireth the quiet shelter of the grave. Yet do we find him piously inquiring into the reasons and final causes of the Almighty's mysterious dealings with him: "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; show me wherefore thou contendest with me." We are well assured that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." All things are under the restraint and control of Infinite Wisdom and Love. In every pain you suffer, whether appointed or permitted only, God is seeking your good. It were a double loss, doubly aggravated, first to lose your friend, and then to lose the benefit of the loss. Is not the loss of the former sufficient, without adding to it, by your immoderate grief, the infinitely greater loss of the latter?

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it refuses the proffered consolations of friendship. When Jacob rent his robe, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned many days for Joseph, and all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted, saying, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." "In Ramah was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, refuseth to be comforted because they are not." To decline the needed consolation when it is offered, is certainly a sin. There is some little excuse for the children of Israel in Egypt, when Moses spake unto them of the promised deliverance, and "they hearkened not unto him for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage." The dying Rachel would have called her son Benoni, "the son of my sorrow," but that would have been too sad a remembrancer to Jacob of his beloved wife, and he called him Benjamin, "the son of my right hand."

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it will not accept relief even from the hand of God. He hath assured you that his grace is sufficient for you, and invited you to come to him for help in time of need. Yea, he is a present help in trouble; and he saith, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." To all who ask, he "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." And will you not ask and receive, that your joy may be full? He hath not given you breath merely for sighs and groans, nor articulate utterance for ungrateful complaints of his providence. He hath afflicted you, perhaps, on purpose to draw you to himself; and will you thus defeat the designs of his mercy? Will you turn your back upon him when you need him most? Will you refuse to pray when prayer is most necessary for you? To whom will you go for aid, if not to God? Where will you find comfort, if not in his love? When will you seek the throne of grace, if not in time of trouble? Oh! how sweet is it to say with the psalmist, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it preys upon your health and endangers your constitution. Grief unreasonably indulged soon devours the vigor of the physical system. This is an effectual method of suicide, not less guilty than a resort to the knife, the rope, the river, the pistol, or the poison. Some drink themselves to death, and others grieve themselves to death; who shall pronounce the former more criminal than the latter? Sorrow sometimes kills as suddenly as a bullet or a poniard through the heart; and sometimes it acts as a deadly potion, slow but sure. The food never nourishes, that is always mingled with tears. When your grief is so great, that no balmy airs, nor beautiful scenes, nor pleasant melodies, nor sympathies of friendship, nor solacements of society, nor consolations of religion, can soothe or refresh the soul, then your health is impaired, your strength gradually wastes away, the world loses too soon the benefit of your life, and you haste unsummoned to the judgment. This is the sorrow of the world which worketh death.

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it sours and embitters the spirit against both God and man. This deplorable effect, instead of the peaceable fruits of righteousness, is often produced by affliction, when the providence is misinterpreted and perverted. Then the heart murmurs against God; saying with David, "I have cleansed my hands in vain;" or with Jeremiah, "My strength and hope are perished from the Lord;" or with Jonah, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." I have known persons indulge their grief to such a degree, that they loved nothing, enjoyed nothing, took interest in nothing, cared not for their nearest friends, grew indifferent to society, found no relief in solitude, turned away from the house of God, spurned his holy oracles, hated books, hated Nature, hated the very sunlight, neglected their own persons, and spent life in a continual groan. This is rebellion against Providence. "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" How much better to say, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me!"

Your sorrow is excessive, and therefore sinful, when it continues so long as to become the

settled habitude of the soul. The time for mourning has been limited by all wise nations, and the wisest have generally made it shortest. The Egyptians, who knew not God, mourned seventy days for Jacob; Joseph, his son, only forty-seven days. Israel mourned thirty days for Aaron, and thirty days for Moses, but only seven days for Saul. The inward sorrow, however, may last much longer than the outward show. The formal ceremony is soon laid aside; while the stricken heart carries its wound, still bleeding, to the grave. But the first poignancy of grief should not be allowed to continue too long, lest it produce the injurious effects of which I have already spoken. When it is not only indulged, but cherished as a luxury, it soon becomes sinful. When the mourner persists in nursing his woe, and feeds it with melancholy reflections in silence and seclusion, heeding neither the dissuasives of friendship nor the solacements of religion, he despises his own mercy and injures his own soul. Remember your departed friends with tenderness, but let your sorrow be subdued and holy, and aid the healing art of Nature with the balm of grace to shorten as much as may be the term of its continuance.

"But it is my best Friend that hath smitten me. It is the stroke of my heavenly Father that hath wounded me. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me. He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone; and my hope hath he removed like a tree. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

Then it is a painful touch. It is grievous to be smitten by a friend, and the stroke of the father breaks the heart of the child. Your bereavement is indeed a fiery trial, a sword in the bones, a spear that pierceth to the soul. I pity your sufferings, and wonder not at your complaint.

But it is a common touch. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Who hath not lost a friend? Who hath not sat in the shadow of the tomb? Even the immaculate Saviour suffered in the flesh. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." And can you hope for exemption?

And it is a righteous touch. The Creator is also the proprietor, and he has an unquestionable right to resume what he hath loaned. All are his; and shall he not do what he will with his own? Shall not the master of the garden gather his own fruits, the commander of the army dispose of his own men? What claim have you upon him for happiness? And how much more misery do you deserve than you have ever suffered!

And it is a needful touch. The loving Father never inflicts a needless stroke. Your delinquency calls for chastisement. Your forgetfulness of eternity requires the stern admonitions of death. The creature that has usurped the Creator's place must be removed. The heart that has grown fast to the world must be torn away. The tree that has struck its roots so deep into the soil must be loosened before it can be transplanted.

And it is a skilful touch. The musician is familiar with all the keys and powers of his instrument. The physician is well acquainted with the character of the disease and the qualities of the application. God's understanding is infinite, and his wisdom is infallible. He knoweth perfectly, when, and where, and how, and by what special means, most effectually to touch the human heart.

"Learn to lie passive in his hand,
And trust his heavenly skill."

And it is a tender touch. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." "A bruised reed will he not break, and the smoking flax will he not quench." The wound must be probed, but the surgeon will do it gently, and soothe the pain with cordials. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;" but "for your profit, that ye may be partakers of his holiness." He correcteth his people with loving-kindness,

"Most merciful when most severe."

And oh! is it not a blessed touch? It is the touch of a sword, which subdues the rebel will; the touch of a hammer, which breaks the stony heart; the touch of a fire, which separates the dross from the gold; the touch of a light, which illuminates the darkness within; the touch of a key, which opens the royal palace to the king; the touch of a fountain, which washes away sin and uncleanness; the touch of a sceptre, which assures of the monarch's gracious acceptance; the touch of a master, who asserts his claim and takes his property; the touch of a Saviour, rescuing the soul which he hath ransomed with his blood; the touch of a lapidary, polishing an immortal gem for Emmanuel's crown! God's dealings are mysterious but merciful. "Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." He saith to us, as he once said to Simon, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

"A bruised reed he will not break;
Affliction all his children feel;
He smites them for his mercy's sake;
He wounds to heal."

The Christian, like the Captain of his salvation, is made perfect through sufferings. His present griefs are the pledges of future joys. The gloomy night shall soon give place to an eternal day.

Such are the ways of God. And shall my ignorance impeach his perfect knowledge, and my folly arraign his infinite wisdom, and my evil complain of his transcendent goodness, and my weakness refuse the aid of his almighty arm? "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Strange were it indeed to hear one say: "Alas! I am undone, for I have nothing left but God." But is not this practically the language of the believer who sinks into a state of despondency under providential bereavements? He that has God for his portion could not be enriched by the bequest of a kingdom, by the inheritance of a world. The heir of God is heir of all things.

Zeno, who lost his whole fortune in a shipwreck, afterwards declared that it was the best voyage he ever made, because it led him to the study of philosophy and virtue. Happy for you, my friends, if your afflictions lead you to Christ! Happy, if, losing a friend, you find a Saviour! Receive, I beseech you, this chastisement as a new proof of your heavenly Father's love. Learn something from heathen Seneca, who said he enjoyed his friends as one who was soon to lose them, and lost them as if he had them still. Nay, learn rather from Him who bore your griefs and carried your sorrows; who, with the burden of all our accumulated woes pressing upon a sinless heart, exclaimed—"Father, not my will, but thine, be done!" Thus shall your loss disclose to you the pearl of great price, and enrich you with the imperishable wealth of the kingdom of God!

[1] Preached at a funeral, 1862.

X.

WISDOM AND WEAPONS.[1]

Wisdom is better than weapons of war.—ECCLES. ix. 18.

We glory in the excellence of our arms. We boast of our superiority in this respect to the ancients. We attach great importance to such advantages, and rely upon them for the success of our campaigns. It is well. Let these things be properly estimated. But are we not in danger of overlooking what is much more essential to our prosperity? Is there nothing better than guns and bayonets? The royal Preacher gives the preference to wisdom. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge, the pursuit of worthy ends by proper means; and if we take the word in this its ordinary sense, the truth of the text will be obvious to all. But in the writings of King Solomon, as often in other parts of the Holy Scriptures, wisdom has another and higher meaning—piety, practical religion, conformity of heart and life to the law of God; and attaching this signification to the term, who can question the statement of the wisest of monarchs, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war"?

We will begin with some simple illustrations of this proposition in its lower application to secular affairs, and thus prepare the way for more copious discourse concerning its higher application to spiritual matters. And may God mercifully grant me persuasive words, and you "a wise and understanding heart"!

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war," because it gains its advantages at less expense. Weapons of war are very costly, and millions of money are required to insure their success. But wisdom wants no gold. "More precious than rubies," it is "without money and without price."

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war," because it wins its victories without sacrificing human life. Weapons of war strew the field with mangled and ghastly corpses, and fill the land with widows and orphans and broken hearts. But wisdom sheds no blood. Its tendency is to preserve life, and not to destroy. It resorts to counsel instead of appealing to the sword, and subdues its enemies without endangering its friends.

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war," because it leaves no wrecks or ruins as the landmarks of its progress. Weapons of war spread desolation and destruction on all sides; and buildings burned, and plantations devastated, and wealth scattered to the wind, everywhere attest the evils of international contention. But wisdom wastes no property. It accomplishes its beneficent purposes without injuring any man's estate. It turns no fruitful field into a wilderness,

and disfigures the landscape with no smouldering heaps of demolished habitations.

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war," because it gives no encouragement to the malevolent and wicked passions. Weapons of war produce hatred, contempt, revenge, a thirst for blood; converting men into fiends, and rendering earth the counterpart of hell. But wisdom makes no enemies. It conciliates. It attracts love, inspires confidence, and binds communities and nations together in fraternal amity. It breathes something of the spirit of Christ's evangel, and echoes the angelic proclamation—"Peace on earth, good-will toward men."

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war," because its achievements are always of a much more valuable character. Weapons of war may overcome brute force, breaking the power of armies, subverting the thrones of monarchs, and arresting the course of incipient revolutions; while the mind remains unconvinced, the will unsubdued, and the heart still strong in its enmity. But wisdom eradicates the principle of hostility. It blasts the bitter fruit in the bud. It disarms enemies by making them friends. It occupies the mind, subjugates the will, and leads captive the heart. Therefore it is said, "He that winneth souls is wise."

These illustrations of the text in its lower application must suffice. Proceed we now to the higher. Wisdom is true religion, evangelical godliness; and this, whatever view we take of it, will be found superior to weapons of war.

We see its superiority in the excellence of its nature. Weapons are material: wisdom is spiritual. Weapons are terrestrial; wisdom is celestial. Weapons are worn upon the person: wisdom is seated in the soul. Weapons are wielded by the warrior: wisdom controls its possessor. Weapons are of earthly origin, human invention, Satanic suggestion: wisdom, like "every good and perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." It is a beam divine, by which we see the invisible. It is the breath of God, inspiring a new life, and imparting a new nature. It is an influence from the Infinite Spirit, quickening the dead conscience, and purifying the polluted heart. It is a gracious power, which subjugates, exterminates all that is hostile to holiness within, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," and nerving every faculty to the conquest of the mighty host of spiritual foes that "beleaguer the human soul."

We read its superiority in the importance of its objects. Weapons are employed both for aggressive and for defensive purposes: so is wisdom, but in a very different way. Are weapons used to gain freedom? So is wisdom, but it is the freedom of the soul. To acquire riches? So is wisdom, but they are the "durable riches of righteousness." To augment power? So is wisdom, but it is power over the passions and the habits. To repel invasion? So is wisdom, but it is the invasion of the Prince of darkness. To expel enemies? So is wisdom, but they are the enemies intrenched within us. To extend dominion? So is wisdom, but it is the dominion of the world's Redeemer. To subjugate nations? So is wisdom, but they are the nations fighting against God. To liberate captives? So is wisdom, but they are the captives of sin and Satan. To gratify revenge? So is wisdom, but it is revenge against the destroyers of our race. To secure commendation? So is wisdom, but it is the commendation of the Eternal Judge of quick and dead. To achieve glory and honor? So is wisdom, but it is the glory of a heavenly inheritance and the honor of an imperishable kingdom. These are objects worthy of angelic enterprise, and illustrative of the transcendent excellence of wisdom.

We observe its superiority in the purity of its principles. Weapons foster and encourage evil passions in the human heart, and stimulate all its corrupt and vicious propensities; while wisdom eradicates them, originates the opposite virtues, and cultivates in all their "beauty of holiness" the gracious "fruits of the Spirit." On the one side we see pride; on the other, humility. On the one side, contempt; on the other, courteous respect. On the one side, distrust; on the other, ingenuous confidence. On the one side, restless ambition; on the other, tranquil contentment. On the one side, grasping avarice; on the other, open-handed beneficence. On the one side, bitter emulation; on the other, mutual aid and sympathy. On the one side, injustice and oppression; on the other, due regard for the rights of all. On the one side, deceit and wily treachery; on the other, unswerving truth and uncompromising fidelity. On the one side, turbulence, confusion and anarchy; on the other, the reign of divine law and angelic order. On the one side, savage brutality and diabolical cruelty; on the other, tears for all woes and help for all needs. On the one side, bitter and implacable malignity; on the other, the spontaneous flow of brotherly kindness and charity. On the one side, the desperate wrath and fury of revenge; on the other, meekness, gentleness, oblivion of injuries, and all the mind of Jesus. On the one side, an impious disregard of the Almighty's government; on the other, a profound reverence for his holy name, with an earnest desire to know and a settled purpose to do his blessed will. On the one side, an exemplification of the spirit and temper of hell; on the other, a practical illustration of those pure affections and hallowed influences which make men resemble the angels, and render our life "as the days of heaven upon earth." These are the ennobling principles of wisdom.

We perceive its superiority in the grandeur of its alliances. Weapons may secure an alliance with the governments of the world, with its wealth and power, its learning and eloquence, its useful and decorative arts, the glory of its monarchs, the policy of its statesmen, the influence of its sages, and the splendid renown of its conquerors. But wisdom boasts of loftier alliances with "the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent in whom is all its delight;" "a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people;" the *élite* of the universe, the "sons and daughters of the Lord

Almighty," "whose names are in the book of life," whose robes of light, and harps of gold, and thrones of power, and crowns of glory, and palms of victory, await them in the city of "many mansions," the "house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens." It connects itself by invisible but indissoluble ties with the redeemed denizens of the "city of God," the purest and noblest men that ever lived and died, patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, philanthropists and reformers, "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world,"

"Doers of illimitable good,
Gainers of inestimable glory."

It claims community with the cherubim and the seraphim, spirits of light and love, the unshorn strength and unsullied purity of heaven. It lays hold upon the throne of God, and establishes an everlasting covenant with the Almighty, and interests the Ruler and Proprietor of the universe in its cause. Such an alliance secures divine sympathy, heavenly recognition, efficient co-operation, help for all needs, succor in all troubles, defence against all dangers, deliverance from all enemies, the triumphant success of all enterprises, and the enjoyment of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And with this magnificent endowment of privileges, unknown to the hero of the battle-field, Wisdom, strong in her weakness, rich in her poverty, happy in her misfortunes, tranquil amidst popular commotions, and fearless of ten thousand foes, sits singing in the house of her pilgrimage—

"Not from the dust my joys or sorrows spring;
Let all the baleful planets shed
Their mingled curses round my head,
Their mingled curses I despise,
If but the great Eternal King
Look through the clouds and bless me with his eyes."

We confess its superiority in the character of its achievements. With arms men conquer inferiors or equals: through wisdom they overcome beings vastly greater than themselves—greater in number, in nature, in knowledge, in cunning, in courage, in energy, in endurance, in all the facilities and resources of warfare, except such as are furnished by the grace of God. With arms we vanquish human enemies: through wisdom, superhuman. With arms we vanquish external enemies: through wisdom, internal. With arms we vanquish visible enemies: through wisdom, invisible. With arms we vanquish mortal enemies: through wisdom, immortal. With arms we vanquish earthly enemies: through wisdom, heavenly principalities and powers dethroned and doomed. With arms we subdue provinces and subvert empires: through wisdom, overcome self, and bring our own rebellious nature under the government of God; and he who accomplishes this, saith Solomon, "is better than the mighty—than he that taketh a city." Alexander is said to have conquered the world. Vain boast! The world was not half conquered. But "he that is born of God," St. John tells us, "overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith is the theological synonyme of wisdom. Faith is the foundation of all true religion. Faith, wisdom, is real heroism. And it was through this the holy men of old achieved their splendid triumphs and won their immortal honors. And it is through this that the Christian still overcomes the world; overcomes its spirit; its false philosophy; its evil customs and fashions; its cunning strategy, and its open violence; the shallow sophistry of its unbelief, and the affected valor of its impiety; the fascination of its soft seductions and all the fury of its fierce revenge. Faith, with Hope and Charity for its allies, sprinkled with "the blood of the Lamb," and bold in "the word of its testimony," with the eagle's eye and the lion's courage, goes forth to the holy conflict; and all the missiles of malice, ridicule and infidelity—as cannon-balls by cotton-bales—are effectually repelled by the meekness and gentleness of its spirit; and the enemy at length succumbs to the virtue that he finds invincible. This is real victory! This is the sublime triumph of wisdom!

We behold its superiority in the measures and motives of its warfare. Here is a perfect contrast. Arms triumph by physical force and energy: wisdom prevails by the persuasiveness of truth, the gentleness of charity, the beauty of holiness, and the spirit of the Lord. The soldier seeks the aid of science and strategy: wisdom adheres to the simplicity of the gospel, repudiating all art, concealment, disingenuous trickery, such as false colors, masked batteries, treacherous ambuscades, and challenges its enemies with an honest front upon the open field. The military hero is cheered on by the voice of popular applause: wisdom has no admiring multitudes, seeks no encouragement from the world, but pursues its spiritual warfare in silence and in secret,

"All unnoticed and unknown,
Loved and prized by God alone."

There is much in "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war" to stimulate the combatants: wisdom has all the stern reality of the conflict, without any of its inspiring accompaniments—the martial strain, the glittering ranks, the floating banners, the roar of artillery, the shout of charging squadrons, and the clash of resounding steel. The mailed knight of the battle-field may gather strength from emulation: wisdom knows no emulation but that of love and good works—no fierce competition or contentious rivalry—striving only to excel in kindness of heart, sweetness of temper, and the moral likeness of the Son of God. You may be encouraged to the conflict by the hope of gain: wisdom has no expectation of earthly profit—no spoils to be won, no cities to be sacked, no mansions to be robbed, no bank-vaults to be rifled; but it forsakes all to follow Christ, and is content to practise his daily self-denial. You may look forward to worldly distinctions and

honors: wisdom seeks no promotion short of the kingdom of heaven—no fame of heroism, no record in history, no celebration in song, no decoration of stars and wreaths, no triumphal arches, nor monumental pillars, nor statues in the temples of the gods. Nay, the times have been when those noble heroes who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, though the world was unworthy of them, were deemed unworthy of the world; had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, of bonds and imprisonments; were tortured, not accepting deliverance; were tempted, stoned, burned, beheaded, crucified, sawn asunder; wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, and concealed themselves in dens and caves of the earth; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. "But wisdom is justified of her children."

We discover its superiority in the certainty of its final success. Arms may fail for want of discipline and skill: wisdom has drilled her soldiers, teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight. Arms may fail for want of strength to wield them: wisdom girdeth us with strength unto the battle; and nerved by her influence, the feeblest in our ranks can run through a troop and leap over a wall. Arms may fail for want of competent officers: wisdom rejoices in the "Captain of the Lord's host," "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," with his eyes of flame, his vesture dipped in blood, many crowns upon his head, and a sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth, followed by the armies of Heaven, going forth conquering and to conquer. Arms may fail for want of sufficient defences: wisdom is environed with "a wall of fire," a living circumvallation of seraphim and cherubim; and "the name of Jehovah is a strong tower, into which the righteous runneth and is safe." Arms may fail for want of timely re-enforcements: wisdom can call to her aid at any moment "twelve legions of angels;" and, could we see their splendid array, the mountain is continually aflame with the artillery and cavalry of God. Arms may be rendered useless by the overwhelming forces of the foe: wisdom leads "a great multitude that no man can number;" any one of whom can chase a thousand, and two can put ten thousand to flight; as Gideon, with his three hundred, routed and destroyed the myriads of Midian. You may be unsuccessful in battle from a variety of inevitable accidents: wisdom never breaks her blade, nor bursts her musket, nor loses her bayonet, nor dismounts her artillery, nor drops a chance match into the magazine; and her batteries can never be stormed, nor her forces flanked, nor her trains captured, nor her ammunition exhausted, nor her officers out-generalled and circumvented by superior strategy. Your troops may lack the proper support of the government: Jehovah has pledged all his infinite resources to the aid of wisdom in "the good fight of faith;" and his word shall not fail till heaven and earth pass away. Your hopes may perish upon the very verge of victory: what soldier of wisdom ever left the field without the spoils of a vanquished foe? "Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us." Success, therefore, is certain. "The victory is the Lord's, and he giveth it to whomsoever it pleaseth him." Let the enemy boast, and rage, and threaten! "Who hath hardened himself against the Lord and prospered?" The sea shall drown them; the earth shall devour them; the fire of heaven shall consume them; the stars in their courses shall fight against them; or they shall perish at the blast of an angel's breath under the very walls of the city of God! However the line of battle may waver for a season, however the fortunes of the field may vacillate between victory and defeat, the word of God is sure, and wisdom shall triumph at the last.

We recognize its superiority in the ineffable glory of its issues. "Lamentation and mourning and woe" follow the triumph of arms, and the land bewails the unreturning brave: the victories of wisdom are universal blessings, cheering the earth and gladdening the skies; and wherever she prevails, the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose; and "the voice of salvation and praise is in the tabernacles of the righteous, saying, The right hand of the Lord is exalted! the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly!" The warrior may win a splendid spoil; and the capture of vast stores and precious treasures—the acquisition of cities, kingdoms, continents—may reward his valor: wisdom "winneth souls"—more costly than all the gems of Golconda, and all the gold of California—the most magnificent structures ever reared, and the most extensive empires ever formed. The victor may feel a proud gratification in his success, but it is necessarily mingled with much of unhappiness: the achievements of wisdom afford "fulness of joy, and pleasures forevermore"—joy without any mixture of sorrow, pleasures without any interval of pain. The commendation of superiors and the applause of the multitude are often embittered to the conqueror by the envy of rivals and the malice of foes: but the "Well done, good and faithful servant!" of the Eternal Judge shall be re-echoed by the happy universe, and the saints and the seraphim shall compass you about with songs of deliverance, and every detractive tongue shall be shut up in the bottomless pit forever. History will record your heroism, eloquence will emblazon your victory, and poetry will perpetuate your praise; and the pencil, the chisel, the temple, the towering column and triumphal arch, will transmit your fame to future generations: but the Christian's memorial is in the New Jerusalem, "the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness"—"a new name, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it"—a new creation, glowing with the image of its Creator, over which the morning stars shall sing together, and all the sons of God shall shout for joy. The renown of your heroic deeds may fill the world and flourish over your grave: but wisdom shall inherit "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The brass will tarnish, and the marble will moulder, and the voice of the orator will go silent, and the minstrel shall sing no more in the sepulchre; but wisdom's "praise is not of men, but of God;" "and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Pharaoh perished; but Moses is immortal. Ahab went down to the dust; but Elijah drove his steeds of flame through the sapphire firmament. Saul fell in his blood upon Gilboa; but the tuneful son of Jesse still leads the symphonies of the church in the wilderness,

while the cherubim and the seraphim around the throne join in his choral hallelujahs. Egypt is a desert, and Babylon is a heap of ruins, and Nineveh looks sadly up from her ancient sepulchre by the Tigris, and the imperial Mother of Nations sits in melancholy widowhood upon the bank of the "yellow Tiber;" but Joseph, and Daniel, and the captive Tobit, and "Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ," have found "a city of habitation," "whose builder and maker is God"—

"Where age hath no power o'er the fadeless frame,
Where the eye is fire and the heart is flame!"

The Roman conqueror returned in triumph, with large display of spoils and prisoners; and a magnificent array went forth to meet him, and the populace rent the heavens with shouts of welcome, and the wall of the city was torn down for his entrance, and splendid offerings sparkled at his feet, and stately structures over-arched his head, and rich odors perfumed the air, and sweet music enlivened the scene: oh! who shall tell of wisdom's coronation in the metropolis of the universe—the unnumbered millions of the ransomed, with palms and crowns and lutes, amid the radiance of angelic beauty too bright for mortal eyes, singing as the sound of many waters and mighty thunderings unto him that loved them and washed them in his blood!

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war." Are you satisfied with the proof? Then rally to the standard of wisdom, join her forces, fight her battles, win her rewards, sing her transcendent glories, and share the blissful immunities and emoluments of her victorious veterans forever! Why do you hesitate? Are you afraid of the opinions or the speeches of others? Oh! for shame! You have plenty of martial courage; where is your moral courage? You can march up to the mouth of the cannon and rush upon the point of the bayonet; why quail you at the scoff of the infidel and the scorn of the blasphemer? Come out, come out, on the side of truth and righteousness! Enrol yourselves with the saints, under "the Captain of your salvation!" Defiant of earth and fearless of hell, put on your arms, and away to the field, and take part in the conflict, that you may have place in the coronation!

"Soldier, go—but not to claim
Mouldering spoils of earthborn treasure,
Not to build a vaunting name,
Not to dwell in tents of pleasure.
Dream not that the way is smooth,
Hope not that the thorns are roses,
Turn no wishful eye of youth
Where the sunny beam reposes.
Thou hast sterner work to do—
Hosts to cut thy passage through;
Close behind the gulfs are burning—
Forward! there is no returning.

"Soldier, rest—but not for thee
Spreads the world her downy pillow;
On the rock thy couch must be,
While around thee chafes the billow:
Thine must be a watchful sleep,
Wearier than another's waking;
Such a charge as thou dost keep
Brooks no moment of forsaking.
Sleep as on the battle-field—
Girded—grasping sword and shield:
Those thou canst not name or number
Steal upon thy broken slumber.

"Soldier, rise—the war is done:
Lo! the hosts of hell are flying!
'Twas thy God the battle won;
Jesus vanquished them by dying.
Pass the stream—before thee lies
All the conquered land of glory;
Hark! what songs of rapture rise!
These proclaim the victor's story.
Soldier, lay thy weapons down,
Quit the sword and take the crown;
Triumph! all thy foes are banished,
Death is slain, and earth has vanished!"

XI.

LOVE TESTED.[1]

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?—JOHN xxi. 17.

Were the dear Lord to appear personally in our midst this morning, addressing one after another by name, and putting the same question thus pointedly to all, who would answer in the negative? Who would frankly confess so base an ingratitude? Who of all this assembly would, by the acknowledgment of so flagrant an impiety, write himself down with the reprobate? However negligently or wickedly men live, few are willing to admit that they are utterly wanting in love to him who loved them to the death.

But is love to Christ indeed so common? With a few exceptions of unbelief so blasphemous as to shock ordinary irreligion, are all men truly his friends? Are they so taken with his teaching, so enamoured of his virtue, so captivated by the beauty of his character, that they are ready to forsake all to become his disciples, and prove the sincerity of their attachment by the cheerful endurance of the severest sufferings? Do they generally accord to him his claims, practically observe his requirements, and devote all their energies to his service? Do they so believe in him as the one only Mediator between God and man, the one only name under heaven given among men by which they can be saved, that they renounce all others and cling with the tenacity of a death-grasp to his cross?

Let us ask ourselves the question. Let us enter solemnly into conference with our own hearts. Let every one bring his consciousness, his recollection, the facts of his life, to the test. "Do I truly love the Lord Jesus? Will my love bear the ordeal of a faithful and impartial scrutiny? Is my conduct, public and private, such as to put the matter beyond all doubt and controversy? Should my crucified Friend come visibly into the church, take me by the hand, look straight into my eyes, and say, as he did to 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' could I answer as promptly, as honestly, as emphatically, as the apostle did—'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!'"

No superfluous or unprofitable inquiry is this, my dear brethren; but a matter of infinite moment, addressing itself immediately to each individual soul. Had Jesus deemed it a question of little consequence, think you he would have put it thrice in so searching a manner to St. Peter? Does not the repetition seem to imply a danger of mistake and self-deception? Yet the question obviously supposes the apostle might know with certainty whether he really loved or not. And if he, why not we? I will not put it to your consciousness, in which any man may be deceived; but the manifestation and fruits of love furnish certain practical tests, quite easy of application and far less liable to mistake; so that no soul, well instructed in the principles of Christianity, need remain in ignorance of so vital a matter.

Here, however, before we proceed any farther, a word of explanation and caution seems necessary. The passion of love, as we all know well enough, is innate. We naturally love our friends and all that is pleasing and attractive to us. But to this general rule love to Christ Jesus is certainly an exception. So fallen and sinful are we, that we cannot love that which is holy, perfect, divine, without the enlightening and purifying Spirit of grace from above. So blinded is our sight, so depraved and perverted our moral taste, that Christ is to us as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, and there is no beauty that we should desire him. His sublime purity we cannot appreciate; his beauty of holiness we cannot endure. We must be regenerate, quickened together with Christ, raised from a death in trespasses and sins to a new life in righteousness. Possible it may be, indeed, for the infant, consecrated to Christ in baptism, to "lead the rest of his life according to this beginning;" from the very font, daily increasing in God's Holy Spirit more and more, until he come to Christ's everlasting kingdom. But if, as commonly happens, the fact prove otherwise—if there has been a defection from baptismal grace—there must be a return to the bond of the covenant, and a renewal by the power of the Holy Ghost, or there can be no true love to Christ. And those who now sincerely and supremely love him may know precisely when and where the blessed restoration took place, and the Sun of righteousness arose upon them with healing in his wings. And others, not baptized in childhood, may have a vivid recollection of the place and the moment in which they first discovered the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and the Redeemer began to be unspeakably precious to their souls. Love to Christ, therefore, is not natural, but supernatural—not the result of self-culture, but the product of divine grace—a new and heavenly principle shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. The test of which let us now apply; and may God help us to do so with honest and faithful heart! "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

If you love the Lord Jesus, you will think of him with pleasure. Love produces tender thoughts of the beloved. You cannot cease to think of them even when long absent. Can those who love the

Saviour ever forget him? Will not their meditation of him always be sweet? How is it with you? Can you say with the psalmist—"The desire of our soul is unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee"? Do you think often of Jesus, and dwell with delight upon his love? Do you meditate sweetly of him in the night-watches? Is the thought of him ineffably pleasing and joyful to your soul?

If you love the Lord Jesus, you will delight in communion with him. Love finds its greatest happiness in the presence of the beloved. Long absence is painful, and hopeless separation is intolerable. Every opportunity of communion with Christ, therefore, the saints value as a high privilege and seize with eager joy. The word in which he speaks to them is their sweetest music; the closet in which they meet with him is their highest Pisgah; the table at which he feeds them is the very antepast of heaven. Is this your experience? Do you love to speak with Christ in prayer? Do you joyfully listen to the messages of his grace, and read with pleasure the epistles of his love? Do you feast with a keen relish upon the heavenly manna and the new wine of the kingdom which he provides for you in the

"Rich banquet of his flesh and blood"?

Can you appeal to him in the language of the psalmist—"Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth"? and when deprived of its privileges, do you exclaim with him—"My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God; when shall I come and appear before him?"

If you love the Lord Jesus, you will constantly aim and study to please him. With regard to any undecided course of action, you will not ask, "How will this please others?" but, "How will it please Christ?" Him whom your soul loveth, whatever the effect upon your neighbors, you will never be willing to displease. You would rather offend every friend you have on earth than the heavenly "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." "Ye are my friends," saith he, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." And again he saith, "If any man love me, he will keep my words." Hearty obedience is the best proof of love. If you truly love him, your obedience will be prompt, earnest, constant, uniform, unquestioning and uncompromising. Try yourselves, my brethren, by this criterion. Is the word of Christ the supreme law of your life? In all things, do you seek his pleasure, and rejoice to do his will? Are his commandments grievous to you, or do you find his yoke easy and his burden light? Do you esteem his service a hard bondage, or the blessed freedom of the sons of God? Is it your meat and drink to do his will, as it was his to do the will of his Father? He is now challenging your affection, as Delilah challenged that of Samson: "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me?"

If you love the Lord Jesus, you will rejoice even in suffering for his sake. What was it but love stronger than death to him who died for them that made the apostles glory in tribulations, sing hymns of praise at midnight in their dungeons, wear their chains and manacles more proudly than princes ever wore their jewels, and welcome the scourge and the cross which completed their conformity to the divine Man of sorrows? And why did Ignatius chant so cheerfully among the lions, and Polycarp pour forth his thanksgiving so joyfully as he stood unbound in the flames? And why did so many Christians, in the early persecutions of the Church, rush to the tribunal to confess their faith in Christ, hastening to share the fiery coronation of their bishops and their brethren? There is but one answer to these questions; and if you love Christ as they loved him, you will be ready to make any sacrifice or endure any suffering for his glory. Like Moses, who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," you will "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Like the Hebrew captives in Babylon, you will prefer the company of the king's lions to the society of his courtiers, and the sevenfold heat of the Chaldæan furnace to the perfumed breezes that regale the royal gardens. Hard sayings are these to ears like yours? Have you no sympathy, then, with the Prince of sufferers? Are you not ready to take up your cross, and follow him to Calvary? If not, how can you say, "We love him because he first loved us"?

If you love the Lord Jesus, you will love those who are the special objects of his love. Love to him is one half of his religion; love to his followers is the other half. The latter is the fruit of the former, and the best evidence of its reality. "By this," saith our Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." And did he not pray for his little flock, that they might love one another as he had loved them? And does not his most loving apostle plainly tell us that this is the proof of our having passed from death to life? And does not St. Paul assure us that it is "the bond of perfectness" and "the fulfilling of the law"—more important than faith, knowledge, miracles, the grandest eloquence, the largest beneficence, and even martyrdom itself? How can you love Christ, and not love Christians? If you love the Father, will you not love his children? If you love the Master, will you not love his servants? Truly loving your Monarch, can you fail to love your loyal fellow-subjects? What proof give you, then, of your love to the brethren? Do you prefer their society to that of the world? Do you delight to converse with those

who delight to converse with Christ and to converse with you about him? Is it a great pleasure to you to do them kind offices, supply their temporal needs, promote their spiritual well-being, and cheer and comfort them in the manifold sorrows of life? Is their interest as dear to you as your own, their reputation, and the salvation of their souls? If not, how can it be said that you love them as you love yourself? And, failing in this, where is the proof of your love to him who laid down his life for us all?

If you love the Lord Jesus, you will sympathize with him in his grief for those who love him not. Over the Jews who rejected him Jesus wept upon Olivet, and for the Romans who crucified him he prayed upon his cross. And when his loving heart broke beneath the burden of its anguish, think you he ceased to grieve for a guilty and ungrateful world? As he looks down from his mediatorial throne upon the multitudes who everywhere spurn the gospel of his grace and seek death in the error of their way—despising the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God—does he not still weep and pray for the perishing neglecters of so great salvation, and seek those who can weep and pray with him, in whose tears and intercessions he can pour forth the full measure of his loving sorrow for the undone? And, loving him, will you not respond to his compassionate lamentations, feeling as he feels for the impenitent ingrates who are despising their own mercy and trampling upon the precious blood of their redemption? How is it with you, dear brethren? Am I saying what sounds strange to you, if not absurd and preposterous? Have you never wept for the wicked as Elisha did when he foresaw the cruelties of Hazeel, or as St. Paul did when he told his brethren of the enemies of the cross of Christ? Have you never said with David—"I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law"? Tell me not that you love Christ, while you have no sympathy with his love for sinners—no self-sacrificing zeal to save them, pulling them out of the fire!

If you love the Lord Jesus, you will look for his glorious appearing and long for his eternal fellowship. This was the one great gladdening hope of the apostles and all the early Christians. Before his departure, their dear Master had promised them that he would come again, and receive them unto himself; and with perfect faith in his word, they joyfully waited and watched for his return in the clouds of heaven. And still the expectant bride is on the outlook for her absent Lord; and often we hear her from behind the lattice of her chamber-window calling—"Make haste, my Beloved! and be thou like the young hart upon the mountains of spices!" What Christian soul does not respond to the sweet words of Milton? "Come forth out of thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth; put on the visible robes of thy imperial majesty; take up that unlimited sceptre which thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed thee; for now the voice of thy bride calls thee, and all things sigh to be renewed!" What saint of Jesus does not thrill to the eloquent strain of Edward Irving? "Blessed consummation of this weary and sorrowful world! I give it welcome; I hail its approach with joy; I wait its coming more than they that watch for the morning! O my Lord, come away! hasten, with all thy congregated ones! My soul desireth to see the King in his beauty, and the beautiful ones he shall bring along with him!" Verily, "herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world." But were he this very day revealed from heaven in flaming fire, should we take lute and timbrel and go forth to welcome him to his ransomed world, or fly to the rocks and mountains to hide from his presence and escape from his wrath? In a great earthquake which shook a vast city, when the people said it was the day of judgment and sought where they might take refuge from their Judge, a certain poor man began to cry out—"Oh! is it so? is it so? Then whither shall I go to meet my Lord? on what mountain shall I stand to see my Saviour?" Oh! to greet the Redeemer in his glory—who that loves him does not leap for joy at the expectation? "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God;" and the saints in their redeemed bodies "shall be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Again the happy bride looks forth and cries—"The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills!" And you, my dear brethren, if you truly love your Saviour, so far from dreading him as your judge, will hail him as your friend; when the sound of his chariot-wheels, heard from pole to pole, shall gladden the graves of his beloved; and the voice of rejoicing and praise, rising from the tabernacles of the righteous, shall roll its thunder-chant through all the realms of joy!

Take, then, these *criteria*, and test your love to Christ. Surely the result will be worth the examination. For what transcendent importance, everywhere in Holy Scripture, is given to this divine principle! and in all ages, especially all Christian ages, what fine things have been said and sung of love! Not to recite the sublime statements of St. John and the inspired raptures of St. Paul, with which you are all familiar; the great bishop of Hippo calls it "that sweet and sacred bond of the soul, having which the poorest is rich, wanting which the richest is poor;" while the golden-mouthed orator of Antioch declares it "the grandest mastery of the passions, and the noblest freedom of the redeemed man." The prince of schoolmen, the Angelical Doctor, writes: "Divine love surpasseth science, and is more perfect than understanding; for we love more deeply than we know, and love dwelleth in the heart, while knowledge remaineth without." The greatest

military chieftain of modern times remarked to his friend in St. Helena: "I have conquered nations by the sword; Jesus Christ overcame the world by love." A more heroic spirit—St. Catherine of Sienna—says: "Love was the cord that bound the God-man to the cross; the nails could not have held him there, had not love bound him fast." The martyr-monk of Florence—Savonarola—cheering his fellow-sufferers in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, assures them that love to the dear Lord "plucks the sting of death and disinherits the grave," and that he who thus conquers Satan in his final assault upon the soul "has won the battle of life." And here is the noble testimony of Thomas à Kempis: "Nothing is sweeter or purer than love; nothing is higher, or broader, or fuller; nothing more pleasant, or more excellent, or more heroic, in earth or heaven. Weary, it is not tired; oppressed, it is not straitened; alarmed, it is not confounded; sleeping, it is ever watchful; like a living flame and burning torch, forcing its way upward and overcoming all things." Finally, Eloquence takes wing, and soars with her sister Song; chanting in the strain of Sir Walter Scott—

"Love rules the court, the camp, the grove;
And men below, and saints above;
For love is heaven, and heaven is love!"

or with Charles Wesley from his fire-chariot at the gates of pearl—

"By faith we are come to our permanent home;
By hope we the rapture improve;
By love we still rise, and look down on the skies,
For the heaven of heavens is love!"

In conclusion, let me repeat what I said in the outset. The question of our Lord is a plain matter of fact, about which there need be no uncertainty; and every one of us, with careful self-examination, may be able to answer it at once. I have heard some honest Christians sing:

"'Tis a point I long to know;
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"

Discard that verse, my brethren! Its theology is worse than its poetry. For a filial love, or a conjugal love, about which the wife or the child is uncertain, you would not give a farthing. Do not the anxious thought and the longing to know indicate at least some small degree of love? Not loving at all, you would care nothing about it, you would be quite indifferent to the question. Dim indeed the spark may be in your bosom; but bless ye the Lord that it is not utterly gone out, and answer his gracious inquiry with this better verse:

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is still so faint;
Yet I love thee, and adore;
Oh for grace to love thee more!"

So praying, the breath of the Holy Spirit will soon blow the spark into flame; and when the Master asks once more, "Lovest thou me?" with bounding heart you will reply: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!"

[1] Preached in London, Eng., 1866.

XII.

MANIFOLD TEMPTATIONS. [1]

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.—1 PET. i. 6, 7.

Why is not the Christian life a perpetual joy? Why do so many sincere Christians seem often melancholy and unhappy? The human heart is easily moved, and very little is necessary to set it vibrating with pleasant emotion. The voice of a happy child, the carol of a forest bird, the beauty of an opening rose, the glory of a sunset sky, the coming of a valued friend, the visitation of a vagrant dream, the recollection of a peaceful hour, the wind that chases away the misty cloud,

even a word in season fitly spoken, may fill the soul with tranquil happiness or raise it to an ecstasy of delight. Why, then, should not the believer in Jesus rejoice evermore with joy unspeakable and full of glory? With the glad tidings which the gospel brings us, the love of God in Christ which it reveals, the assurance of redemption, the remission of sins, the communion of saints, the ministry of angels, the visions of paradise restored, the anticipated epiphany of our Lord in his glory, the advent of the New Jerusalem in all its golden magnificence, the restitution and renovation of this disordered *cosmos*, the awakening of the body from its long sleep in the sepulchre, and the life everlasting of the just in the many mansions of their Father's house, why do we not make the valley of Baca ring with the prelude of our eternal song? Strange, indeed, that all this should have so little power to cheer, and gladden the people of God in the house of their pilgrimage—that Christian enjoyment should seem in general so feeble and so fleeting, when it ought to flow on with the constant strength and increase of a great river to its repose in the amplitude of an unsounded sea.

The apostle in the text solves for us the mystery. It is not that there is nothing in Christianity to cheer and elevate the feelings. In the great mercy of God, which hath begotten us again to a new and living hope by the certain resurrection of our crucified Lord—in the prospect of an imperishable inheritance reserved for us in heaven, and the perfect assurance of our divine preservation till that inheritance shall be revealed—we do indeed "greatly rejoice," exult with gladness, leap with exuberant joy; though now for a little while, as necessary for our spiritual discipline, we may be put to grief in "manifold temptations." Faith we have in these glorious disclosures of Christ's evangel, and that faith is genuine, efficient, sometimes quite triumphant; but at present, perhaps, the gold is in the furnace, enduring the test from which it shall soon come forth purified, beautified, fit for the coronal of our expected King.

The word temptation sometimes means enticement, and sometimes trial. We are tempted when we are enticed to evil, whether by Satan, or his servants, or our own evil hearts; and we are tempted when our faith is tried, when our virtue is tested, when our character is put to the proof, whether by the malice of men or the providence of God. Evidently, the term here is to be taken in the latter sense. The temptations of which the apostle speaks are trials, such as those of Job, Jacob, David, the holy prophets and martyrs, all in every age who live godly in Christ Jesus. "Manifold temptations" are complicated trials—trial within trial—one infolding another—one overlapping another—many involved in one—all so interlaced and bound up together that we cannot analyze them, cannot even trace the threads of the tangled skein. The grief or "heaviness" which they produce does not necessarily indicate a want of trust in God, or of submission to his holy will. The firmest believer and most steadfast disciple may sometimes, through outward affliction, walk in darkness and have no light, even while he trusts in the name of the Lord and stays himself upon his God. Christ never doubted his Father's love, nor feared the issue of his mighty undertaking; yet when the hour and the power of darkness came upon him, he "began to be sorrowful," "sore amazed," and "very heavy." "Not my will, but thine, be done"—was the language of his guiltless lips, when bowed in his baptism of blood beneath a burden which might have crushed a world. So his suffering servants patiently endure their tribulations, glorifying God in the midst of the fire, and singing with the royal psalmist—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance!"

Christianity offers us no exemption from the ills of life, but gives us grace to bear them, and sanctifies all to our highest good. It is as true now as in the days of David, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous;" and after more than eighteen centuries, the apostolic statement needs no qualification—"It is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven." The thwarted scheme; the blighted hope; the ill-requited love; the frequent betrayal of confidence; the falseness or fickleness of trusted friendship; the cross of shame laid by another's hand upon the shoulder; the deep anxiety about the future, which robs the present of more than half its joys; the sudden failure of health, withering the bloom of youth, or bringing down the strength of stalwart manhood; the moral defection of one long loved and cherished, involving the irretrievable ruin of a character as dear to you as your own; the death-couch where, day by day and night by night, the mother fans the flickering spark of life in her darling child; the dear mounds in the cemetery, where affection fondly strews her memorial blossoms, and keeps them fresh and fragrant with her tears; many a secret grief, too sacred for the stranger to meddle with, and too tender to be breathed into the ear of the most familiar friend; and more than all, Christ's virgin bride weeping in sackcloth and ashes—a broken-hearted captive that cannot sing the Lord's song in the land of the idolater and the oppressor;—these are some of the fiery trials and manifold temptations by which a gracious Providence is disciplining us for our better destiny. But the ordeal is as varied as the shades of character and the aspects of human life. Now we have fears within; anon we have fightings without; then deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's water-spouts, and all his waves and billows are gone over us. But the Lord rideth in the tempest and sitteth upon the flood; saying to the fiery steeds of the one and the angry waters of the other—"Hitherto, but no farther!" No chance is here; all is beneficent design and transcendent wisdom, restricting and controlling the agencies of our providential discipline as our spiritual interests may require. "Now," not always—"for a season," not forever—"if need be," not without the ascertained—are the Lord's beloved subjected to these terrible ordeals. The probation must

precede the award. The shock of battle comes before the victor's triumph. Be not disheartened, but hold fast to your hope. The tide that is gone out will soon return. The revolving wheel that has brought you so low will soon lift you on high. But there is no rose without its thorn, nor dayspring unheralded by the darkness. Our light afflictions are but for a moment. Like summer showers they come and go, leaving the heaven brighter and the earth more beautiful. Many a sore chastening, over which we have wept with a sorrow almost inconsolable, has proved one of the greatest blessings that God ever granted us in this vale of tears. What is needful for us, he knows better than we. The refiner sits by his furnace; and the hotter the fire, the shorter the process and the more thorough the purification. The physician watches by his patient, with his hand upon the pulse, observing every symptom, and thrilling to every throb of pain. The trial cannot be too severe for his purpose, nor too long continued for our good. God wants to see how much joy, how little sorrow, he can mingle in our cup, with perfect safety to our spiritual health, and a long series of experiments may be required for the perfect solution of the problem. He is leading us through the great and terrible wilderness to a city of habitation; and as we look back from the hills of our goodly heritage upon the rough path of our pilgrimage, the whole journey may seem to us as a dream when one awaketh. Not all of the Christian's sufferings are the products of Christianity; many of his bitterest griefs are altogether of his own creation; and yet there is not an evil he endures, from which Christianity does not propose to evolve good for him—not a dark cloud which it does not glorify with its beams, nor a crown of thorns which it does not convert into a jewelled diadem.

But while the burden is mercifully lightened, it is not at once removed. The aim of our heavenly Father is not so much to take it away, as to enable us so to bear it that it may become a blessing. Thus he would test our faith, develop its strength, prove its reality and efficiency. But why should faith be thus tested? why not rather the whole Christian character? Because faith is the root of character; and as is the root, so is the tree. The test of faith is practically the test of character, and in this fact lies the obvious value of the test. It is the law of the universe, and an essential factor in the process of our salvation. Look at this mass of gold just brought from the mine. How beautiful! how precious! But there are impurities in it. The true metal must be disengaged from all baser substances. Cast it into the crucible. "See! it is melted!" Yes, but not destroyed. "Is it not welded to the alloy?" No; it is separated from it—purified—glorified! So with our faith. Too precious to be purchased, even a single grain of it, with all the gold-fields of the world, it must be purged of its dross, and made easily distinguishable from the common counterfeits which deceive mankind. God gives it to the furnace. Does it perish in the process? Nay, it is as imperishable as Christ, and as enduring as the soul. The ordeal proves its genuineness and develops its latent lustre. The principle is universal, and everywhere manifest—evolved by Nature, illustrated by Providence—testing laws, customs, institutions, civilizations—awarding due honors to the wise, the pure, the brave, the true-hearted—consigning the false, the foolish, the indolent, the pusillanimous, to merited oblivion or infamy. Over the pearl-gates of the city of God is inscribed: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Abraham's faith was tried by fire in the Plain of Mamre and on the Mount Moriah. St. Peter's faith was tried by fire in the garden, in the basilica, and at the Saviour's cross. In Eden, the first Adam's innocence was tested to our shame; in the wilderness of Judæa, the second Adam's obedience was tested to our glory. Before the birth of humanity, angelic loyalty passed through its ordeal in the heavenly places; and when the fulness of the prophetic times was come, God made proof of his love to a fallen race by a trial which shook the earth and rocked the thrones of hell. "If these things are done in the green tree, what shall not be done in the dry?" Every thing else tested, why not Christian character? For, what is Christian character? Is it not a man's protest against sin, his declaration of a new life in Christ, his assertion of a citizenship in heaven and joint heirship with the Son of God? Surely, this is a matter of sufficient moment to require a test, and no test can be too rigid that brings out the blessed reality. Think not strange, then, of the fiery ordeal. Providence is thus co-operating with grace for your sanctification. Bruised by tribulation, the flowers of Christian virtue give out more freely their fragrant odors; and the clusters of the vine of God must be trodden in the wine-press before they yield the precious juice which shall gladden the children of the kingdom. "When he hath tried me," saith Job, "I shall come forth as gold." By trial faith is transmuted into works, and by works faith shall be justified before the assembled worlds. "The Egyptians, whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see no more forever." Courage, ye fearful saints! The clouds which are gathering over you shall rain righteousness upon you; the lightning that blinds you reveals the chariot of your King; the thunder that terrifies you assures you of his love. Courage! His glorious epiphany is at hand. Forth shall he come from the pavilions of the sky, with an escort of many angels, and anthems that wake the echoes of eternity. Then shall the tears of earth become the gems of heaven; and the tuneful sorrows of every psalmist shall rise, thrilling, into choral hallelujahs! And who will ever regret the "heaviness through manifold temptations" which hath wrought in him a meetness for the bliss immortal, or behold with aught but joy ineffable the precious gold of his faith which was tried with fire, now "found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ!"

XIII.

CONTEST AND CORONATION.[1]

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.—2 TIM. iv. 6-8.

I go back eighteen centuries and a half into the past, and find myself in a grand old Syrian city. About midday I ride out at a western gate along a great highway looking toward a picturesque group of mountains. Straight before me towers the white head of Hermon, like that of a patriarch amidst his children. On my right and left are groves and gardens and smiling villas, a paradise of verdure and beauty, as far as the eye can reach. On this road marched Abraham two thousand years before me, and Jacob returning from Padan-Aram, and Jonah going to Nineveh, and all Israel in chains to Babylon. Enough, surely, in these objects, to stir the dullest brain and kindle the coldest heart. Thus occupied, my attention is suddenly arrested by a troop of horsemen riding briskly toward the city. Their leader is a young man, of rather low stature, with keen black eye, and stern and determined aspect. A single look is sufficient to assure me that he is no common man, and here on no common errand. It is the tiger of Tarsus, in fierce pursuit of some of the lambs of the Good Shepherd. A few Christians from Jerusalem, driven out by persecution, have come hither for refuge; and Saul, with full authority, self-solicited, is on their track, "breathing out threatening and slaughter." You know the rest. Blessed be the lightning-stroke that consecrated what it smote, and made the bold persecutor the bravest apostle of the Crucified!

Thirty years later, in the world's metropolis, I visit the Mammertine Prison adjoining the Forum. Who is this, sitting on a block of travertine, with a tablet on his knee, a stylus in his hand, and a little ewer-shaped lamp at his side? As he looks up a moment from his writing, I see something in his face that reminds me of the young officer at the head of that vengeful expedition. He is indeed the same man—the same, and yet another. Toil, hardship, privation, imprisonment, and cruel treatment of all kinds, have wrought sad changes in his physical frame. Bent, bald, almost blind, though not more than sixty-five years old, I should hardly have recognized him without a word from his warder. One of Nero's victims, he waits here calmly for the hour of his release by the sword. Already doomed perhaps by sentence of the tyrant—it is not certain—neither he nor his keeper knows—he has undertaken another letter—most likely the last he will ever write—to Timothy, his "dearly beloved son." Abounding with godly counsel and encouragement to an intrepid and zealous young bishop, it is full also of the most inspiring utterances of Christian faith and hope. Among other incentives to diligence and fidelity, he adduces his own experience and expectation, and these are his words of cheer: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Not all called to be ministers and martyrs of Christ, we are all called to be his constant and uncompromising followers; and in the humblest sphere of Christian discipleship there is demand for the utmost activity and zeal, and in many cases for the heroic martyr-spirit commended to the bishop and exemplified in the apostle. Let us see, then, what instruction we can get from the text.

The first thing here to be noted is the apostle's calm contemplation of his present position: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

In a popular work of fiction two characters are taking final leave of each other. The one is full of heart and hope; the other, deeply dejected and despondent. "Farewell," is the last sad word of the latter—"Farewell! your way leads upward to happiness; mine downward—to happiness also." Such helpless resignation to the inevitable, in one form or another, we may all have witnessed. Few things are more common in human experience; and the dying, however much they have loved life or dreaded death, yield themselves at last to what cannot be averted or avoided. But in the apostle's language there is something more than this stolid and sullen submission. There is cheerful faith and buoyant hope—a conscious triumph over all the evils of life and all the terrors of death.

I had a friend very ill. For three days his life hung in doubt with his physician. When he began to recover, he said to me: "Death came and looked me in the face; but, thank God! I could look him in the face without fear." Here stands a man face to face with the last enemy in a far more

terrible form. To die as a public criminal at the hand of the executioner is very different from lying down to sleep one's self into another world—very different even from falling in the field fighting for all that is dearest to the patriotic heart. Yet the apostle speaks of his fate as calmly as if he were about only to set out on a journey or embark for a voyage. The manner of his death he already knows. A Roman citizen, he cannot be burned, strangled, or crucified, like some of his brethren; and Nero, devil as he is, can do no worse than take off his head and send him to his Saviour. He is ready to be offered as a sacrifice—poured out as a libation; and the time of his departure—the loosing of the hawser—the lifting of the anchor—is at hand, when he shall sail out upon the ocean of eternity.

A good man, dying, said: "I am in the valley, and it is dark; I feel the waters, and they are cold." Not so the apostle. All with him is bright, hopeful, joyous. His last hours are the best of his life. It is not a stoical indifference to suffering, nor a disgust with the world that has misused him, nor a weariness of his holy work. Long since he learned in every state to be content. Some years ago he was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, but willing to remain a while in the flesh for the benefit of his brethren. For him, to live is Christ, to die is gain. Living or dying, he is the Lord's, and Christ is magnified in his flesh. At peace with heaven and earth, what has he to fear from either? Knowing whom he has believed, and confident that he is able to keep that which he has committed to his custody, he is ready at the beck of the executioner to go forth from his dungeon, and his last walk on the Ostian Way shall be the triumphal march of the conqueror.

The second thing here to be noted is the apostle's pleasing review of his accomplished career: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

The reference is to the old Grecian games—the Olympian, the Isthmian, the Nemean, and the Pythian. These festivals, we are informed, originated with Pelops, were brought to perfection by Hercules and Atreus, and restored by Iphitus when they had fallen into neglect. Very popular they were, celebrated with great pomp and ceremony, and made use of to mark memorable events and public eras—that of consuls at Rome, of archons at Athens, of priestesses at Argos. From Greece they passed to Italy; and were so much in vogue at the world's metropolis, that an ancient author speaks of them as not less important to the people than their bread. With these spectacles both St. Paul and his beloved Timothy must have been well acquainted, and in the writings of the former no metaphors are more frequent than those drawn from the Grecian games.

"I have fought a good fight"—literally, striven a good strife, or agonized a good agony. The reference is to the athletic contests of the arena—wrestling, boxing, and fighting with swords. The apostle's life had been a perpetual struggle and conflict. He says he has "fought with beasts at Ephesus"—a metaphorical description doubtless of his fierce encounter there with the enemies of Christianity. Wherever he went, he met hosts of foes, marshalled under the banners of Jewish prejudice and pagan superstition. And the world assailed him with all its enginery of temptation and persecution; and the native corruption of his own heart caused him many a sore conflict, though in all these things he was more than conqueror through the victorious Captain of his salvation. As with St. Paul, so with all Christians; baptized into a warfare with the world, the flesh and the Devil; and signed with the sign of the cross in token of this consecration as Christ's servants and soldiers to their life's end. But this is "a good fight"—in a good cause, under a good captain, with good arms, good allies, good comrades, good supplies, good success, and good rewards—in all respects better than the patriot's battle for freedom, the crusader's conflict for the holy sepulchre, or any competition ever maintained in the arenas of Greece and Rome.

"I have finished my course." The figure is changed. Seated with fifty or sixty thousand spectators in the Circus Maximus, we are looking down upon the *stadium*, where men stripped to the waist, with eyes fixed upon the goal, are rushing along for the prize. There goes St. Paul!

"Swiftest and foremost of the race,
He carries victory in his face,
He triumphs while he runs!"

Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to those which are before, how eagerly he presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! With our apostle this is a favorite illustration of the Christian life—its steady aim, its strenuous action, its habitual self-denial, and patient endurance to the end. "Know ye not," he writes to the Corinthians, "that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.... They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read: "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us." So all Christians must run, never pausing in their progress, nor for a moment relaxing their energies, till from the goal they can look back and say—"I have finished my course."

"I have kept the faith." Here seems to be a reference to the strict rules and rigid discipline to be observed in both these methods of competition. In the arena and on the *stadium* every thing was duly ordered and prescribed, nothing left to chance or choice, and he that strove for the

mastery was not crowned except he strove lawfully. In the race, there must be no deviation from the line marked out for the runner; in the combat, no unfairness nor violation of the rules. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly," saith the apostle; "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest after having preached to others I myself should be rejected." "Would you obtain a prize in the Olympic games?" said a pagan philosopher. "A noble design! But consider the requirements and the consequences. You must live by rule; you must eat when you are not hungry; you must abstain from agreeable food; you must habituate yourself to suffer cold and heat; in one word, you must surrender yourself in all things to the guidance of a physician." "The just shall live by his faith." Without adherence to this rule, there is no reward. "The life which I live in the flesh," saith St. Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." It is faith that strengthens the Christian *agonisti* with might in the inner man. It is faith that unites the soul to Christ, and overcomes the world. The shipwreck of faith is the shipwreck also of a good conscience. Keep the faith, and it will keep you. St. Paul kept it, and triumphed in martyrdom.

The third thing here to be noted is the apostle's joyful foresight of his glorious coronation: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The object of the apostle's hope is no garland of withering leaves or fading flowers, such as honored the victor in the Grecian games; nor a diadem of gems and gold, such as glorified imperial brows at Rome. He had sowed righteousness, and righteousness he hoped to reap. He had wrought righteousness, and righteousness was to be his reward. The principle of the competition was the chief jewel of the expected crown. The victor's award must show the character of the conflict. And what, to such a prize, are all the splendors of royalty, with all the magnificent pageantry and subsequent privileges of an Olympian triumph? Imperishable, it is called "a crown of life," and "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." In the Convent of Sant Onofrio, I have seen the wreath intended for the living Tasso, but delayed too long, and placed by the *fratti* upon the brow of the dead; and, though very carefully preserved, it was all sear, and crisp, and falling to decay; but upon your heads, O ye righteous! shall your crowns flourish, when this earth and these heavens are no more.

The judge who awarded the prize to the victor at the Grecian games might decide unjustly, either through culpable partiality, or from involuntary error; but "the Lord, the righteous judge," who is to decide the fate of the Christian *agonisti*, is no respecter of persons, and his perfect knowledge and infallible wisdom render mistakes with him impossible. St. Paul's imperial judge was the very incarnation of iniquity; but Christ "shall judge the world in righteousness," and "reward every man according to his works."

The crown was not conferred as soon as the racer reached the goal or the gladiator gave the fatal thrust, but was reserved till the contests were all over and ended, and the claims of the several candidates were carefully canvassed and adjudicated. So the "crown of righteousness" is "laid up" to be given "at that day," when the Lord Jesus shall come to be glorified in his saints. One says, "we must die first;" St. Paul tells us we must rise first. Blessed, indeed, are the dead in Christ; but their blessedness cannot be consummated till their Lord return from heaven and they appear with him in glory.

And to whom, or how many, is the crown to be given? "To all them that love his appearing." All the contestants shall then be collected, and every victor crowned. Christ hath crowns enough for the whole assembly of his saints, and the most illustrious of his apostles would not wish to wear them all. The humblest and obscurest Christian shall have his portion in the royal inheritance. There is only one condition—that we "love his appearing." This was the chief mark of his first followers. Through all their bitter conflicts, their hope clung to the Master's promise. Have we such hope? Rejoice then, and be exceeding glad! Fight on; stretch forward; hold fast your precious faith. In the crown that glitters in the hand of your Judge, is there not sufficient indemnity for all the agony of the conflict?

To this prospect, alas! there is an appalling contrast. Some are fighting an evil fight, running a ruinous race, repudiating the only faith that can save the soul. Think you by unrighteousness to win the crown of righteousness? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Even in the Grecian contests, the unsuccessful candidate found all his toil and struggle utterly unprofitable at the end. And you who never enter the lists, who take no part in the competition, who are mere spectators of the earnestness and the agony of others—will you dare, when the Judge cometh, to stand forth and claim the crown for which you have never striven? "Awake to righteousness!" Condemned already, dead in trespasses and sins, aliens from the Church and strangers to the covenant—what hope is there for you, but in God's regenerating grace, a thorough change of heart and life, a moral transformation of character which shall make you new creatures in Christ Jesus? Not yet is it all too late. Come and offer yourselves as candidates for the heavenly competition. Grace will accept your late repentance, and you will have nothing to regret but your long delay. We challenge you to the contest. All heaven awaits your decision. How long halt you? It is high time you were determined. Step forward, take your position, and struggle for the crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give that day to all who love his appearing!

XIV.

CALVARY TOKEN.[1]

As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.—1 COR. xi. 26.

Between Chattanooga and Atlanta occurred some of the severest conflicts of the American Civil War. For more than a hundred miles the fields are covered with battle-scars, and every hill-top bears traces of fortifications. Near one of the most memorable places may now be seen a cemetery, where Northern and Southern soldiers, side by side, await the resurrection. Visiting it a year after the struggle was over and ended, I found an East-Tennessee farmer sitting by a grave at the head of which he had just erected a handsome marble. To my question—"Was the soldier lying here your son?" he answered: "No, sir; he was my neighbor. I was drafted for the army; my family were all sick; I knew not how to leave them; I was sadly perplexed and troubled. A young man came to me, and said: 'You shall not go; I will go for you; I have no family to care for.' Glad to remain with those who needed me so much, I accepted his generous offer. He went, but never returned. I have brought this stone more than a hundred miles, to set it at the head of his grave. Look there, stranger!" I followed with my eyes the direction of his finger, and read under the name of the noble dead: "He died for me!" And we both bowed the head, and wept.

My dear brethren, there is One far nobler who died for you and me. With a disinterestedness unparalleled in the annals of war, he took our place in a fiercer conflict than was ever waged for freedom or for empire. Fighting our battle, he fell; but falling, conquered all our foes. Triumphant he rose from the dead, and ascended on high, leading our captivity captive. At the right hand of the throne of God, in our nature redeemed and glorified, "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." All that we have or hope of good we owe to his dying love. But in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, with a few chosen witnesses present, just before he went forth to the final engagement, he instituted for us a perpetual memorial of his unexampled charity. Taking bread, he blessed, and brake, and gave to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me." Then, taking the cup, he gave to them, saying: "Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; do this in remembrance of me." This finished, he chanted part of the Great Hallel with the beloved twelve, as if the victory were already won; then gave them his valedictory address, and went out to die. And some twenty-four years later, the great Apostle Paul, in a letter to the Christians of Corinth, having narrated the facts just as they are recorded by the evangelists, adds these solemn words for the benefit of his brethren in all subsequent ages: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

Here, then, is the precious Calvary token bequeathed by the dear Saviour to his redeemed Church. While we contemplate it, hear we not a voice from the excellent glory bidding us take off the shoes from our feet? Approaching the altar to gaze upon the great sacrificial memorial, the ground we tread is holier than that on which Moses stood before the bush that burned in Horeb. There is more of God seen here than in all the fires of Sinai. There he made known his law; here he reveals his love. There we read his will; here we behold his heart. No other ordinance, even of the new and everlasting covenant, contains so much of majesty, so much of mystery, so much of sanctity, and at the same time so much of mercy, as the eucharistic feast; in which the Messiah stands forth to our faith at once the sacrifice and the sacrificer, in the same sacred solemnity instituting an everlasting memorial and a perpetual priesthood.

To us, more than eighteen centuries after the fact, if we have any right feeling and clear perception, the solemn transaction in the upper room,

"On that sad memorable night,"

must wear an aspect far more interesting than it wore at the moment even to the apostles themselves. For we are able to view the matter more deliberately and more dispassionately than they could, and with many additional side-lights to aid our apprehension of the divine truths involved. Certainly no act of the Saviour has laid his Church under greater obligation, none has exhibited in more attractive colors the relations he sustains to his redeemed people. Taking the bread and the cup, does he not remind us of his having taken our flesh and blood? Presenting them with solemn benediction to the Father, does he not intimate to us the offering of his

humanity to Heaven as a sacrifice for our sins? Giving them to his disciples with the command to eat and drink, does he not assure us that he is ours with all the infinite benefits of his incarnation and atonement forever? Ordering the apostles and their apostolical successors as his priests to do what they have just seen him do as their Lord, does he not furnish us a perpetual commemoration of his redeeming love, and a perpetual demonstration of his quickening power, till his return in glorious majesty from heaven to rule the world he ransomed with his blood?

Under both the Hebrew and the heathen rituals, the meat-offering and the drink-offering were inseparable from every piacular sacrifice; and without the conjunctive offering of bread and wine, it is difficult to see how either Hebrew or heathen could have regarded the death of Christ as an expiation for sin. As the death of a martyr, indeed, they might well enough have taken it; but as a sacrifice for human transgression, how could they have received it, unaccompanied by the Holy Supper? Were the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ in the physical sense maintained by the Church of Rome, their perpetual presentation by personal intercession before the Father's throne would be superfluous and even impossible, while the voluntary death of our dear Lord upon the cross would be unnecessary and suicidal. Were they the body and blood of Christ in the merely emblematical sense maintained by the ultra-Protestant sects, they would constitute for us no sufficient assurance of his ever-living mediation in heaven, nor to God any effectual remembrancer of his suffering in the flesh for the expiation of our guilt. Therefore those denominations who deny the propitiatory character of his passion have little care or scruple about the due observance of this most sacred festival—

"Rich banquet of his flesh and blood."

"This do," said the divine Author of the institution, "in remembrance of me"—strictly, "for my memorial;" not merely remembering me—reminding yourselves and others of me; but memorializing God the Father—reminding him of the self-presentation of his well-beloved Son as an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor for our salvation. In doing this, we do not repeat the once offered and forever accepted propitiation for our guilt—a thing which, indeed, we cannot do, and which no word of Holy Scripture warrants us in attempting; but we present a spiritual memorial of that propitiation, setting forth in the sight of God the perfect work and infinite merit of our personal Redeemer; we present the consecrated bread and wine, and with them we present ourselves and the whole catholic Church, to him who delivered up his own Son for us all, and accepted that Son's unknown sorrows and sufferings as a sufficient satisfaction for all human sin. This is the essence of the eucharistic oblation, the anti-typical peace-offering, the great sacrifice of the faithful. How unworthy are we of so sublime a service! and how should we cleanse ourselves to appear with such a gift at the portals of the heavenly sanctuary!

In the presence of the chosen twelve presenting to the Father the meat-offering and drink-offering of the true Paschal Lamb, the appointed High-Priest of our profession solemnly attested to heaven and earth the sacrificial character of his ensuing sufferings, and pledged himself to the speedy accomplishment of the great sin-offering once for all. Enjoining upon his apostles the perpetual continuance of the same ministration by an unending succession of consecrated men, he provided the Church with a proof and the world with a token of the everlasting endurance and efficacy of that sacrifice, once offered, often commemorated, and eternally acceptable to God. Instituting a memorial for all subsequent ages of the completeness and perpetuity of his personal sacrifice, he instituted also the means of appropriating its benefits; and the Christian meat-offering and drink-offering being so intimately associated with the Christian sacrifice, the partaker in faith of the one is partaker in fact of the other, truly eating the flesh and drinking the blood of God's incarnate Son. Hear the Saviour's memorable words in the Capernaum synagogue: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you; whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him."

Hard sayings were these to some who heard them, and hard they still are to all self-blinded unbelievers; but, as St. Augustine says, they are hard only to the hardened, and incredible only to the incredulous. To us who believe, though mysterious, they are very precious. We apprehend their spiritual meaning, and rejoice in the privilege which they open to our faith. Eating and drinking at the Lord's table, we become partakers of his life, his holiness, and his immortality. Here we participate with the Eternal Father in his joy over the accomplished work of his Beloved Son, and with that Beloved Son himself in his joy over the redeemed Church—his treasure and his bride; while heaven and earth unite in the glad festival of faith—the hidden manna and the new wine of the kingdom. And if the living Christ be thus in you, dear brethren! what outward enemy is too strong for you—what duty too arduous—what ordeal too severe? Away with your doubts and fears, O ye faint-hearted disciples! Can you not trust him who, in the power of an endless life, has established his throne in your hearts? With Christ, all things are yours, and no agency of earth or hell can rob you of your regal inheritance!

Contingent upon the sacrifice of the cross, and from that sacrifice deriving all its meaning

and its merit, the eucharistic sacrament itself becomes relatively sacrificial. As beforehand there was a continual sacrificial anticipation of Immanuel's atoning death, so after the event is there a continual sacramental commemoration of the accomplished purpose and prophecy. Both the Jewish passover which foreshadowed the future fact, and the Christian eucharist which to-day commemorates the fact historical, are sacrificial on the same principle and by the same rule—their relation to the cross of Calvary which gives them all their virtue and their value. The agony is over, and Christ dieth no more; the atonement once made without the walls of Jerusalem is still presented by our divine High-Priest before the mercy-seat within the veil. To all who believe, it is efficacious forever, needing no annual or even millennial repetition. But in the eucharistic sacrament, with prayers and thanksgivings, we lift up the reeking cross before the Eternal Father, and plead the sufferings of his Well-Beloved for our salvation. We say to God: "Behold this broken bread; it is the mangled flesh of thy Christ! Behold this purple cup; it is the blood which he shed for our sins! Behold at thy right hand our slaughtered Paschal Lamb, and for his sake have mercy upon us and save us!"

Thus we say the holy eucharist is relatively sacrificial—sacrificial from its inseparable connection with the Redeemer's sacrifice. But even in this sense—the only one admissible to a true faith—the holy eucharist could not be sacrificial, were not its ministers in a corresponding sense sacerdotal. As the sacrament becomes relatively sacrificial by representing the Saviour's sacrifice, so its ministers become relatively sacerdotal by representing his person and functions. Commencing in the paschal chamber an ever-during sacrifice by ministering in person its accompanying meat-offering and drink-offering, he commenced there also the order of an ever-during priesthood by empowering his apostolic ministry to perpetuate that meat-offering and drink-offering forever. And, conferring sacerdotal functions upon the apostolic ministry, he conferred them upon that ministry alone. If he did not intend to limit to the twelve and their consecrated followers the power of consecrating and dispensing the sacramental bread and wine, why were not the whole five hundred brethren, or all the vast concourse of followers from Galilee, admitted to the original celebration? The selection of the few proves the exclusion of the many, and restricts the perpetual prerogative to the ministry of apostolical succession.

The sacerdotal oblation being essential, the sacerdotal celebration is equally essential. The priest must consecrate; the priest must administer; or there is no divinely authorized memorial of the one everlasting sacrifice. No such memorial, where is the recognized bond, connecting the body on earth to its glorified Head in heaven? No such bond, what becomes of the Church, and what assurance has she of an eternal inheritance? That bond secure, the Church is invincible and immortal; the city of God stands upon a rock which no shock of colliding worlds can shake; all her happy people, instinct with the life of their Lord, walking in white robes her streets of gold. And the apostolic series of sacerdotal ministers continuing to the end of time, the conjoined memorial of consecrated bread and wine shall still bind the successive generations of the faithful to the sacrificial cross, till he who for our great and endless comfort instituted the holy mystery nearly two thousand years ago shall return with all his flaming cohorts from the skies to take us to himself forever. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

[1] Preached at Porto Bello, Edinburgh, Scot., 1866. For much of the thought contained in this discourse the author is indebted to the *CHRISTOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*, by the honored rector of his childhood, the Rev. Joseph Stephenson, A.M., late of Lympsham, Somersetshire, Eng.

XV.

HEROISM TRIUMPHANT. [1]

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.—2 COR. ii. 14.

The grandest of all human pageants was a Roman triumph. This honor was conferred only upon the emperor or the general who had conquered a province, or achieved some signal victory. The conqueror was arrayed in rich purple robes, embroidered with flowers and figures of gold. His buskins were adorned with pearls and costly gems, and a wreath of laurel or a crown of gold was set upon his head. In one hand he held a laurel branch, the emblem of victory; and in the other his truncheon, the symbol of authority and power. He was borne in a magnificent chariot, drawn generally by white horses, but sometimes by other animals. Pompey had elephants; Mark Antony, lions; Heliogabalus, tigers; Marcus Aurelius, reindeer. Musicians led the procession, playing triumphal marches; and heralds, proclaiming the achievements of the victorious hero. These were followed by young men, leading the victims, with gilded horns and garlanded heads,

intended for sacrifice. Next came the wagons, loaded with the spoils and trophies of the conquered foe; succeeded by the captured horses, camels, elephants, and gayly decorated carriages; and after these, the captive kings, queens, princes, and generals, loaded with chains. Then was seen the triumphal chariot, outdoing all other magnificence; before which boys swung censers and maidens strewed flowers; while the people, as it passed, prostrated themselves and shouted, "*Io triumphe!*" Immediately behind marched the sentries; and the procession was closed by the priests and their attendants, with the various sacrificial utensils, and a white ox destined for the chief victim. Entering the city by the Porta Capaena, passing through the triumphal arch, and proceeding along the Via Sacra, the splendid *cortége* moved on toward the Capitol; at the foot of which the captives divided, some led to the Mammertine and Tullian dungeons on the right, while the others went straight forward to the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; the former doomed to death, the latter made tributaries if not even allies of imperial Rome. Meanwhile, the temples all being open, every altar smoked with sacrificial fires, and clouds of incense filled the city and sweetened all the air.

With such spectacles the Corinthians were not unacquainted. About two hundred years before St. Paul wrote this epistle, Lucius Mummius, the Roman consul, had conquered all Achaia; had destroyed Corinth, Chalcus and Thebes; and, by order of the senate, had been honored with a splendid triumph and the surname of Achaicus. Over the same people the apostle now has a triumph, but it is a triumph of very different character—a triumph in Christ by the power of the gospel, the glory of which he ascribes to God alone. As in a Roman triumph the smoke of altars and the odor of incense filled the city with a pleasant perfume, so the name and the doctrine of Christ preached by him and his colleagues pervaded Corinth and all the surrounding country—wherever those holy men had labored—with odors as of Eden; and the apostles appeared as triumphing in Christ over idols, demons, devils—over ignorance, prejudice, scepticism, superstition, false philosophy, and all the powers of darkness; yet appropriating no praise to themselves, but attributing all to the wisdom and the mercy of God. Indeed, it is God's triumph, not theirs. He has first triumphed over them, and is now making them the partners of his triumph. Better expressing the sense of the Greek original, Trench and Alford read, "leadeth us in triumph;" and other eminent critics give us substantially the same rendering; while Conybeare and Howson, in their admirable work on the "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," thus translate the language of the text: "But thanks be to God, who leads me on from place to place in the train of his triumph, to celebrate his victory over the enemies of Christ; and by me sends forth the knowledge of himself, a stream of fragrant incense, throughout the world." A pretty free translation, it is true; but embodying, no doubt, the precise meaning of the writer. "St. Paul regarded himself," says Faussett, "as a signal trophy of God's victorious power in Christ; his Almighty Conqueror leading him about through all the cities of the Greek and Roman world, as an illustrious example of his power at once to subdue and to save." The foe of Christ was now the servant of Christ. Grace divine had subdued and disarmed him. The rebel, the persecutor, the conspirator with hell, was brought into subjection, and rejoiced in his burden as a blessing. As to be led in triumph by man is miserable degradation, so to be led in triumph by the Lord of hosts is highest honor and blessedness. Our only true triumphs are God's triumphs over us. His defeats of us are our only true victories. Near the gate of Damascus the lion is smitten into a lamb by the hand of the Crucified; and in a short time the lamb has become his bravest champion. Brought into willing obedience, he falls into Christ's triumphal train, ascends into Christ's triumphal chariot; and, in full sympathy with Christ, becomes the partner of his triumph. Bengel writes—"who shows us in triumph"—that is, not only as conquered by Christ, but as conquering with him. Our victory is the fruit of his victory over us; and the open showing of that, so far from being our shame, is our greatest glory. Therefore saith the apostle—and it is the most heroic utterance of the prince of heroes: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And from this evangel of the crucifixion, which he lives to preach and will die to defend, arises the fragrant odor with which he and his companions are filling the world. As the approach of the triumphal procession is made manifest by the sweet perfume scattered far and wide by incense-bearers in the conqueror's train, so the heavenly Victor makes use of his vanquished to herald the victories of his grace and diffuse like fragrant odors the saving knowledge of his name. It is the triumph of grace over sin, the triumph of truth over error, the triumph of faith over unbelief, the triumph of divine love over human selfishness. It is the right triumphing over the wrong, the pure triumphing over the impure, the heavenly triumphing over the earthly, the spiritual triumphing over the sensual, the eternal triumphing over the temporal, the true religion triumphing over all superstition. It is God by Christ triumphing in man, and man through Christ triumphing with God; who leads us in triumph as his captives, shows us in triumph as his trophies, and "maketh manifest by us the savor of his knowledge in every place."

You see, my brethren, that the apostolic work was missionary work—that the Church, as constituted by these heroic and holy men under the leadership of their divine Lord, was a missionary society—the primitive propaganda of the Christian faith. They were sent forth by the Captain of their salvation to conquer the nations for Christ, and gather captives from all countries into his triumphal procession. For this work St. Paul was added to the original number, and from his peculiar fitness by education and spiritual endowment became the most successful of them all. And the constitution of the Church is still unchanged; and our high calling in Christ

Jesus has never been revoked; and your bishops and clergy to-day are but heralds and incense-bearers in the train of Immanuel's triumph; and every faithful communicant, and every baptized believer, and every humble neophyte, are triumphing with the heavenly Conqueror. Surely here is a demand for all our faith, for all our zeal, for all our moral heroism; and for an embassy like ours, "more than twelve legions of angels" might have been commissioned from the skies. Alas! where sleep our energies? where slumber the holy fires within our hearts? Calm and secure, here we sit in our Christian assemblies. With something of the Spirit we pray, with something of the Spirit we sing, and with much of the understanding we do both. With reverent delight we hear the word of grace, and with unspeakable gladness welcome its revelations of the unseen and the eternal. With our best faculties we inquire into its meaning, seek elucidations of it in ancient literature and modern criticism, and rejoice in its accumulating confirmations from history and from science. We worship with a comely ritual derived from the fathers, and celebrate the sacramental mysteries of our redemption in words that have warmed the hearts of martyrs. But while thus occupied, how little think we of the millions around us who for the same mercies are constantly invoking Heaven with the voice of all their sins and sorrows! For us, Christ "hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by his gospel;" they follow their friends to the burial, and mourn for them without hope, no star gleaming over the grave, nor seraph beckoning out of the darkness beyond; they lie down to die, but above the pallid day no halo gathers, no seraph wings are hovering, no sweet familiar voices inviting to an eternal fellowship of joy. Have we no loving compassions for them, no desire to rescue and save their souls alive? Oh! look at the heathen world, where Satan holds undisputed empire, and man has never felt the power of Christian civilization. Look at the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty; where Belial reigns supreme, and Moloch revels in fire and blood. Look at the countries that languish under the curse of the Crescent, where sense misnamed faith triumphs over reason, and strong delusion has quenched the last beam of divine knowledge, and obscured every ray of intellectual truth. Look at Jacob's heritage of milk, and honey, "destroyed by the wickedness of them that dwell therein"—the most beautiful of lands, the very garden of God, by ignorance and barbarism turned into a sterile waste and delivered up to the tenantry of noisome and noxious creatures. Look at the exiled children of Abraham, a vagabond race, roaming everywhere, and nowhere finding rest; the curse of their rejection branded on every brow, and reprobation written in every feature of an unmistakable physiognomy; their synagogues little better than Mohammedan mosques and pagan temples, their worship an empty and abrogated ceremonial, and Mammon substituted for the Messiah. Look at the villanous impostures of the Vatican, and the notorious corruptions of faith and worship wherever the Roman mystagogue holds sway; the habitual invocation of saints and martyrs; the adoration of images, pictures, and relics; the monstrous abuses and manifold abominations of the confessional; the doctrines of indulgence, purgatory, and human merit; the blasphemous dogmas of papal supremacy and infallibility, and the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin; with the legitimate and lamentable fruits—an abject and atheistic priesthood, and a thriftless and degraded people. Look at your own country, Christian though it is called—your own city, highly as it is favored of heaven; and see how far the masses lie from the living God; how his name is profaned, his altars abandoned, while every place of amusement is thronged with merry votaries of pleasure, and drunken men reel athwart the path of church-going people, and the house of her whose steps take hold on hell stands in the very shadow of the sanctuary, and libidinous songs and blasphemous oaths form the horrible counterpart to your sacred psalmody; on all sides temples of Bacchus and Beelzebub, with scenes of revelry and riot, debauchery and blood, where dissipation discards all disguise, impurity all shame, and impiety all fear. Look at your Western States and Territories—fields demanding a hundred missionaries where you have one; a numerous and constantly increasing population scattered over a vast extent of country, with only here and there a church and a school, like solitary torches a thousand miles apart struggling to dispel the deeper than Egyptian darkness of half a world; while Rome is rearing her temples and convents everywhere, everywhere establishing her brotherhoods and sisterhoods, founding orphan-asylums and educational institutes, exercising a powerful influence over the development of the youthful mind, and poisoning the wells whence the people are to draw the water of their salvation; and heresy and schism are setting up their tabernacles, and agnostic infidelity is travelling *pari passu* with population, and myriads of redeemed immortals are perishing for lack of knowledge. Look at your fair and sunny South-land, lately devastated by contending armies; churches in ashes, cities in ruins, fenceless plantations growing up to forests; bishops and clergymen wofully impoverished, and forced to resort to secular occupations for subsistence; earnest and anxious spirits, shipwrecked in the collision of sectarian crafts, struggling desperately in the dark waters of doubt, and longing to see the life-boats of the Church upon the billows; four million slaves in a state of semi-barbarism suddenly set at liberty like so many unfledged cagelings turned out to the wintry tempest, amidst hawks, and owls, and eagles, and every beast of prey; many of them already relapsing into their ancestral superstitions, suspecting one another as wizards and witches, practising hideous rites and abominable incantations, worshipping some exceptionally ugly old hag as a new incarnation of the Divinity, and dancing with demoniac noises over the graves of their dead. No fancy pictures are these which I present, nor overwrought descriptions of realities. Impossible were it to find language or figures to exaggerate the wretchedness of humanity unrelieved by the gracious revelations of God. In comparison of the moral ruin around us, what was the late catastrophe of a hundred South-American cities, whelming in a common destruction men, women and children to the number of forty or fifty thousand? Should some pilgrim from a distant sphere, traversing the ethereal space with wings of light, chance to cross the orbit of our fallen planet, and cast a momentary glance down at our condition, might he not hurry past with a shudder, suspecting that hell had emptied itself upon earth, and the unhappy race had been given over unredeemed to the dominion of the Devil?

But why dwell on this dismal theme? Oh! I could tell you of victories demanding another David to sing them or another Isaiah to record them, till every loving heart should leap for joy and exult in hope of millennial triumph. But I would fain stir your compassion. I am feeling for your purse-strings among your heart-strings. I want to play a tune upon your spirits which shall echo in Colorado, and make music in New Mexico, and reverberate from the heights of the Himalaya, and gladden the hills round about Jerusalem. Can we survey the valley of vision, and not prophesy to all the winds of God? Can we see millions of immortal beings crushed by the dominion of Satan, and not cry a main to the Prince of peace to come and unseat the great usurper, and establish his own universal and everlasting empire? And how shall we pray successfully, if we answer not our own prayers by pouring our offerings into the Lord's treasury? How shall we arrest the long carnival of crime, and error, and delusion, and infidelity, if we bestir not all our Christian energies, occupying every available position, evoking every beneficent agency of the Church, barricading with Bibles and Prayer-Books the teeming way to ruin, and bridging with the blessed cross the mouth of the flaming pit? Thus, my brethren! may we save souls from death, and give new joy to benevolence in other worlds, and gladden the heart that eighteen hundred years ago quivered for us upon the point of the Roman spear, and fill the reverberant universe with the shout of the apostle—"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place!"

[1] Preached at a missionary meeting in New York, 1868.

XVI.

FRATERNAL FORGIVENESS.[1]

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.—MATT. xviii. 35.

When John Wesley was in Georgia, he was dining one day with Gov. Oglethorpe. A negro waiter at the table committing a careless blunder, the governor said to his guest: "See this good-for-nothing servant; he is always doing wrong, though he knows that I never forgive." "Does your Excellency never forgive?" replied Mr. Wesley; "then it is to be hoped that your Excellency never does wrong." A beautiful reproof; and the more effectual, no doubt, from its gentleness. Those who need forgiveness for their own faults, certainly ought to forgive the faults of others. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven;" but "he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy." This is the lesson taught us in the gospel for the day,[2] which I shall endeavor to unfold and apply. For moral elevation, the passage is very remarkable. Found in some old Greek or Roman volume—in some parchment dug up from Herculaneum or Pompeii—on some tablet or cylinder discovered amidst the *débris* of Nineveh or Babylon—it would have awakened the wonder of the world, and men would never have been weary of praising its transcendent charity.

The Jewish rabbis taught that a man might forgive an injury a second or even a third time, but never a fourth. When St. Peter asked—"How oft shall my brother trespass against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" he doubled the rabbinical measure of mercy, doubtless imagining that he had reached the ultimate limit, and that his Divine Master even could require no more. How must he and his brethren have been astonished when Jesus answered: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, until seventy times seven!" What! four hundred and ninety times? But Jesus puts a definite number for an indefinite. "Count not your acts of clemency," he seems to say; "be your forgiveness of a brother as free as the air you breathe or the light you enjoy—your love as unlimited as the illimitable heaven above you." Then he puts the matter strongly before them in a parable:

A certain king calls his servants—the collectors of his taxes and revenues—to account. One of them is found frightfully in arrears—owing his lord ten thousand talents—a debt which he can never pay. The king orders the sale of the delinquent, with his family and all his effects. Falling at the royal feet, he implores patience, and promises the impossible. Touched with pity, the king forgives the debt. But the forgiven goes to a fellow-servant who owes him the small sum of a hundred pence, seizes him by the throat, and demands immediate payment. The helpless debtor falls before him, and pleads with him as he himself had lately pleaded with the king. The creditor, however, is inexorable; and into prison the poor man must go till the debt is paid. The sad matter

is reported to the king, who recalls the subject of his clemency, rebukes his cruelty, revokes his own act of forgiveness, and delivers the unmerciful over to the tormentors till the last farthing shall be paid. Finally, in application of the parable, the Divine Teacher adds: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

God's mercy to man, and man's unmercifulness to his fellow, are the two principal things set forth in the parable. Let us look at them both, and see how the former enhances the latter, and enforces the duty of fraternal forgiveness.

To have any right appreciation of the master's mercy, we must know something of the amount of the servant's debt. Ten thousand talents was an enormous sum. The delinquent was a viceroy, and the amount he owed was the revenue of a province. In those days large debts were not uncommon. Julius Cæsar owed, beyond his assets, \$1,425,000; Mark Antony, \$2,250,000; Curio, \$3,375,000; Milo, \$4,125,000. An Attic talent was about \$1,080; which, multiplied by 10,000, would make the debt \$10,800,000. But if the Jewish talent of silver is meant, it would amount to \$16,600,000; if the Jewish talent of gold, to \$569,000,000. Now let each talent stand for a sin—10,000 sins! Reduce the talents to dollars, and take every dollar for a sin—569,000,000 sins! Reduce the dollars to dimes, and let every dime represent a sin—5,690,000,000 sins! Reduce the dimes to cents, and let every cent be considered a sin—56,900,000,000 sins! Perhaps, however, our dear Lord never intended by the number of talents to intimate the number of our sins, any more than by the seventy times seven he meant to say how often we should forgive an offending brother. In each case the idea is that of indefinite number, unlimited extent. But if the seventy times seven means mercy without measure, what can the ten thousand talents denote but guilt beyond all human calculation or imagination? Think you any estimate of the number and enormity of our sins can be an exaggeration? "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" "My sins are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me." "My sins are increased over my head so that I am not able to look up." Far better and holier than the best of us, my brethren, was the man who wrote these statements, and left them for an everlasting testimony against those who are pure in their own eyes. If David had such consciousness of sin, what must our consciousness be if we knew ourselves as well? They are the self-blinded, self-hardened, self-deceived, who fancy themselves innocent and glory in their virtue. Even the great apostle called himself "the chief of sinners," and declared that in himself dwelt "no good thing." There is no danger, then, of extravagance in any estimate of our sins of which our arithmetic is capable. So let us proceed a little farther. Take our Lord's summary of the first table of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Here is required the surrender of the whole man as a living sacrifice to his Divine Creator and Sovereign Proprietor. This is his unquestionable claim upon every moment of our existence throughout its immortal duration. A duty this which we cannot omit for a single second without robbing God; and every minute that we neglect it, comprising sixty seconds, we may be said to repeat the sacrilege sixty times; every hour, 3,600 times; every day, 86,400 times; every year, 31,536,000 times; in twenty years, 630,720,000 times; and in forty years, 1,261,440,000 times. But these are sins of omission only, and that in relation to a single phase of duty; add all the other instances, and we must multiply the sum by multiplied millions. Then we must take our positive sins—our violations of the divine law by thought, word and deed—open sins and secret, public and private, personal and social—sins defying all enumeration, and difficult even of classification; and, adding all together, we must multiply the sum by all our faculties, facilities and gracious incentives for doing God's blessed will, and aggravate all by the innumerable mercies and inestimable blessings which he has diffused over our lives as his sunbeams over the earth. And its any thing short of infinite mercy adequate to the forgiveness of such a debt?

For all this, however unwilling, we must give account to God; and how terrible the array, when conscience shall summon forth from the secret chambers of memory every sin of which we have been guilty, and every evil act and every neglect of duty shall stand out distinct and clear in the light of eternal judgment! How shall we meet the reckoning? In all the eternity to come, what satisfaction can we offer for our faults? Can we alter the facts, undo the deeds, repair the wrongs, recall the time, or efface the record? Nay, the account remains uncanceled, and the debt can never be paid. Soul and body, with all the capabilities of both, the creature belongs to the Creator; and by an original and perpetual obligation, perfect love and blameless obedience are his constant duty. Beyond this he can never go. Even though he commit no sin, neglect no duty, he can offer to the Creator no service whatever that is not justly required of him as a creature. By his utmost efforts forever, he simply renders to God what is his indisputable due. How, then, can the transgressor hope to pay the new and additional debt which he has incurred by innumerable crimes? Before he can do a single meritorious act, even his original obligation to God as his creature must be cancelled; but to cancel that is more than the Creator himself can do, the obligation being inseparable from the relation. As to human merit, therefore, the case is hopeless. What, then, is to be done? Sell the debtor, with his wife and children? Such procedure on the part of the creditor was allowed by ancient law. But in what slave-market of the universe shall God sell the sinner? Who will want him but Satan? and Satan has him already, self-sold, and bound by indefeasible indenture. Nay, by this part of the parable our Lord presents justice as ministering to mercy. The menace of punishment opens the way for pardon, and the hopeless condition of the debtor enhances the clemency of the king. See the poor wretch, prostrate at the royal feet, imploring a little indulgence, and promising what is utterly beyond his power. So, on a

bed of sickness, stung by conscience and confronted by doom, often has the most incorrigible transgressor vowed reparation for a vicious life, only to augment his guilt by disregarding the vow on the return of health and strength. But if the sinner cannot pay, God can forgive. If neither saints nor angels can wrest the culprit from the grasp of justice, yet Heaven has found a ransom to save his soul from the pit. Jesus interposes with "a price all price beyond;" the debt is overpaid in the blood of the cross; through the compassion of the King the debtor is released from his bonds; and the angels tune their harps to sing "the blessedness of the man whose unrighteousness is forgiven and whose sin is covered!"

So far the parable illustrates God's mercy to man; what remains is a sad picture of man's too frequent unmercifulness to his brother, and the just punishment of his cruelty visited upon the delinquent. Here are five points worthy of our attention; which, duly considered, may serve to impress upon our minds the duty of fraternal forgiveness.

First, we have the two creditors, with their respective claims. The king represents God in his relation to man; the first servant represents man in his relation to mankind. God has his supreme claims, as creator and sovereign lord, upon the love, worship and obedience of the whole human race; while man has his subordinate claims, as an equal and a brother, upon the justice, the kindness, the sympathy and the charity of all other men—sometimes, as patron and official superior, upon the reverence, submission and loyal service of a particular part of them.

Then, we have the two debtors, with the different amounts of debt. Both are servants, holding a like relation to the king. Both are in arrears, the one to the king, the other to his fellow-servant. Ought not a common bond and a common condition to produce in them mutual kindness and sympathy? But how great the disparity of their debts! ten thousand talents, and a hundred pence—the latter less than a millionth part of the former—if the gold talent is intended, less than a hundred millionth. Surely if the king could forgive the greater, it were a small matter with his servant to forgive the less. In comparison of our sins against God, what are our brother's sins against us? "As the small dust of the balance, lighter than vanity itself."

Next, we have the two arrests, with the opposite methods of their making. Calmly and kindly, in his accustomed way, worthy of his royal dignity, and just as he treated others, the king calls his servant to account. This proceeding was to be expected, and involves neither harshness nor severity. But when the man is found so culpably in arrears with nothing to pay—a case which could not happen without great dishonesty and wickedness—the king orders, as he has legal right to do, the sale of the culprit, with his family and effects, to satisfy some small part of the royal claim against him. Now mark the very different conduct of the criminal. No sooner is he released than he goes out—not staying a moment to express his gratitude or admire the mercy shown him—finds the man who owes him fifteen dollars: and, with a violence unprovoked and inexcusable, lays hands on him, takes him by the throat, and exclaims, "Pay me that thou owest!" Could there be a more unlovely contrast to the conduct of the king? Such is the difference between God's dealing with guilty men and man's dealing with his delinquent brother; the former all mildness and forbearance, the latter all harshness and severity.

Again, we have the two pleas, with their contrary receptions by the creditors. The two pleas are identical; the two receptions, quite opposite. The first servant falls down before the king, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all;" so falls down the second servant before the first, with the very same words upon his lips. Not forgiveness, but merciful indulgence, is what each debtor craves of his creditor; and full payment is what each promises. The payment of a hundred *denarii* seems quite practicable, and not at all improbable; but the payment of ten thousand talents is beyond all power except that of royalty itself. Yet the wretched impossibility moves the royal heart to compassion; while the feasible and probable meets with stern and cruel refusal from the servile defaulter—all mercy on the one side, all implacability on the other. If, when overwhelmed with conscious guilt, you smote upon your breast and implored the divine mercy, your penitential tears moved the compassion of Heaven, how can you now harden your heart against the like plea of an offending brother? Even if he offer no plea, can you be utterly indifferent to his grief? Is this the spirit of Him who prayed for those who were nailing him to the cross? Perhaps your brother's heart is almost breaking, while he is too proud to apologize. A kind word, a look of love, might melt him into tears at your feet. Oh! give him that word, that look! It will restore to your arms a brother—to your heart a peace like that of heaven.

Finally, we have the two issues, with their consequences in impressive contrast. Great as his debt is, the king's debtor is released and forgiven; but the servant's debtor, owing so small a sum, is cast into prison till he shall pay the debt. But how shall he pay it in prison? Nay, it is not to secure payment that he is incarcerated, so much as to gratify the malignity of a wicked and revengeful heart. After so great a mercy shown to himself, the creditor cannot show the smallest mercy to his fellow-servant. And there the poor man must lie, in a private dungeon, amidst filth and darkness, his creditor his jailor, no comforts nor supplies but what are furnished him by friends without, no hope of deliverance till death comes to his release. Such is the contrast between God's dealing with man, and man's dealing with his brother. He compassionately forgives; we cruelly proceed to punish. Or if we pretend to forgive, how different is our forgiveness from his! God forgives gladly; we reluctantly. God forgives promptly; we after long delay. God forgives completely; we but partially and imperfectly. God forgives from the heart; we only with outward formalities. God forgives very tenderly; we with indifference or contempt. God

forgives and forgets the crime; we cherish the bitter memory for many years. God forgives and takes the pardoned sinner to his heart; we thrust him away from our presence and our fellowship forever. God forgives so lovingly that he is said to delight in mercy and rejoice over the pardoned; we with such coldness, such hatred, such haughty disdain, that to meet the object of our clemency in heaven would spoil our joy!

That the cruel severity of the servile creditor should touch the hearts of his fellow-servants with sorrow is no matter of wonder. Stern and inexorable as were the laws of the age, no man without grief or anger could witness such inhumanity. In our day the case would have convoked an indignation meeting, if not a mob; with denunciatory resolutions, if not the prompt application of the code of Judge Lynch. The better method, however, is chosen; and the sad matter is prudently reported to the king. The king recalls the late object of his amazing clemency, in a dignified but very pointed speech remonstrates with him, and then delivers him to the tormentors till he shall pay the last farthing of the debt once forgiven. A righteous but terrible punishment! A state criminal, he goes to the public prison, the royal dungeons—perhaps, like the Mammertine and Tullian at Rome, three stories under ground. The debtor's prison, however, was ordinarily in the house of the creditor—often in his cellar; where the prisoner was kept in chains, subject to the creditor's will, to be tortured or slain as he chose. Slaves were there on purpose to torment him, and make his life as wretched as possible. They scourged him, beat him with rods, racked him with engines, pulled out his teeth, plucked out his nails, burned out his eyes, cut off his nose and ears, tore and mangled his flesh with hooks and pincers—to make him disclose his hidden treasures, to induce his friends to pay his debt for him, or simply to gratify a diabolical spirit of revenge. That all this has its counterpart in God's retribution upon the implacable, though almost too terrible for our faith, is the plain teaching of the parable. Men and angels rise up in remonstrance with Heaven against the unforgiving. And when the divine Heart-searcher calls him to judgment, what answer can he make to the dread animadversions of the angry king? Dare he now pray, as he often did on earth, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors!" Will he lift up his voice and sing, as he used to do in the church,

"That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me!"

It was a mockery then; he will not repeat it now. Speechless as the unrobed intruder at the marriage feast, he stands trembling before his Judge. Angels of justice, take him away! Let us not see his anguish, nor hear his lamentation! Showing no mercy, he has lost all claim upon mercy. Conscience his eternal tormentor, any spot in the universe may be his dungeon of despair. Ask him now the question he has often asked with a sneer—"Is there a hell, and where is it?" He lays his hand upon his heart and answers—"There is, and it is here!" Angels of justice, take him away!

"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

[1] Preached in St. John's, Buffalo, N.Y., 1869.

[2] Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

XVII.

CHRIST WITH HIS MINISTERS.[1]

Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—MATT. xxviii. 20.

The agony of redemption is accomplished. The lately crucified and buried is alive forevermore. Forty days he has walked the earth in his resurrection body, instructing and comforting his disciples. The time is come for his return to the Father. He must enter into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. If he go not away, the Comforter will not come—the baptism of fire and power will not descend upon the Church. But before his departure, he renews the commission of his apostles: "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Ye publicans and fishermen, what an embassy! How vast the field! How grand the work! How glorious the promise! Heaven never gave a sublimer commission; man never went forth under a mightier sanction, or on a nobler errand. To utter the words which were syllabled in thunder from out the flames of Sinai, to publish the love that was written in blood upon the cleft rocks of

Calvary, to administer the sacramental mysteries of the new and everlasting covenant, to negotiate a perpetual amnesty with this revolted and ruined province of Jehovah's empire, to convert perishing souls from sin to righteousness and build them up in the blessed faith that saves,—this is to do what for ages has occupied the purest spirits and loftiest intellects of our race, and enlisted the interest and the energies of seraphim and cherubim, and furnished constant employment for all the agencies of the infinite goodness and wisdom and power. How poor in the comparison are all earthly diplomacies and royal ministries! Thrones, triumphs, the homage of the living world, and the praise of a thousand generations to come,—what were these to the office and dignity of Heaven's ambassador! How should the Christian minister tremble beneath the burden that weighs down the angel's wing, or rejoice to bear the tidings sung by celestial voices over the hills of Bethlehem! And who were sufficient for these things, but for the Master's promise appended to the command—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!"

"Lord, it is enough. With such assurance, we will go. With such assistance, we will preach. With such encouragement, we will baptize. With so mighty a patronage, we will summon the nations to thy feet. If thou be with us, we shall fear nothing, we can do all things. If thou aid and defend us, no enemy is invincible, no achievement is impracticable. In court or camp, in palace or prison, in temple or forum, in city or desert, to Jews or Gentiles, princes or peasants, scholars or rustics, sages or savages, we will gladly set forth thy claims and offer thy salvation." So might the apostles have answered their ascending Lord; and so, in effect, they did answer him. They went forth everywhere, and preached the kingdom of the Crucified. Mighty in spirit, they conferred not with flesh and blood. Strong in faith and hope, they consulted neither present appearances nor future probabilities. Constrained by the love of Christ, they hastened, with his message of grace, from city to city, from province to province, from nation to nation. Nothing retards them; nothing intimidates them. The word of the Lord is as fire shut up in their bones, and they are weary with forbearing. They must speak, or they will die; and though they die, they will speak. They cry aloud, and spare not. In the dungeons they lift up their voices, and in the tempests of the sea they are not silent. Before awful councils and sceptred rulers they bear witness to the precious truth. Under the crimson scourge and on the cruel rack they steadfastly maintain their testimony. Death only can effectually interdict their prophesying; and even in the agonies of death, ere yet the organs of speech are paralyzed, they offer Christ's salvation to their murderers, tenderly beseech those who are mocking their tortures, and bless with loving words the lips that are cursing them out of the world. And with what effect, let the early triumphs of the gospel testify; idols abolished; temples abandoned; cities converted; churches planted everywhere; whole provinces embracing the faith of Jesus; monarchs upon their thrones trembling before manacled preachers; Christianity spreading, even during the lifetime of the apostles, as far northward as Scythia, southward as Ethiopia, eastward as Parthia and India, westward as Gaul, Spain, and the British Isles; and a little later, assuming the imperial purple, and lifting the Labarum, glorified with the cross, as the signal of salvation to the nations; and all this, because Christ hath said, and so far hath fulfilled the saying,—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

But the promise is ours. It extends through all time. It can never be obsolete, while Christ hath an ordained servant upon earth. Who talks of change? Who says the apostolic office, with its high prerogatives and awful responsibilities, was intended only for a season, and has long since passed away? Who sneers and scoffs at the claim of the Holy Catholic Church to this sublime descent on the part of her chief pastors, and the consequent connection of the whole body of her clergy, through a regular series of ordinations, with the blessed men first commissioned by our divine Lord to go forth and disciple all nations? And hath the Master abandoned those who are obeying the mandate and perpetuating the sacred succession? Hath the Word forever settled in heaven come utterly to naught, and the Rock dissolved on which the Church was founded, and the gates of hell prevailed against her? True, the direct inspiration is withdrawn, and the miraculous endowments are no more; but these are not essential to the apostolate, and were not intended to be permanent; being only the needful authentication of a new revelation from heaven, and therefore discontinued as soon as the Christian faith was once well established among men. The work of the ministry, however, is the same, and its divine sanctions are the same, and its three orders are the perpetual ordinance of Jesus Christ. Ay, and its conflicts are the same, and its succors and consolations in all its sorrows and sufferings are the same, and the faithful servant is still as much as ever the object of his Master's loving care. Whoever else may abandon him, the glorified Man of sorrows saith, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Wherever he goes, Christ attends him. Wherever he labors, Christ sustains him. Wherever he preaches the gospel or administers the sacraments, he has the express authority and assured blessing of their heavenly Author. As the Lord stood by St. Paul, and strengthened him, when all men forsook him; so will he stand by his ministers in every time of trial, and strengthen them for every duty and every danger. Trusting in his might, they will never be left to their own weakness. Depending upon his counsel, they will never be abandoned to their own poor expedients. Weary and faint, his arm will support them. Doubtful and perplexed, his wisdom will direct them. Destitute and afflicted, his bounty will relieve them. Persecuted and calumniated, his providence will vindicate them. Faithful to their sacred functions, all their teachings will be clothed with a divine power, and every priestly act will be hallowed with a heavenly unction. O my brethren! beside all your baptismal fonts to-day, at all your altars, and in all your pulpits, stands he of the wounded hands, the mangled feet, the thorn-pierced brow, and the ever-open side, saying,—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!”

And do we not need such assurance? What is the end and aim of the gospel ministry? To undo the work of the Devil; to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; to reconcile them to the law of holiness, and bring their rebellious thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ; to draw them against the stream of their carnal inclinations and worldly ambitions and interests; to make them love what they naturally hate, and hate what they naturally love; to graft the degenerate plant of a strange vine into a new and heavenly stock, that, nourished by its life, it may bring forth the wholesome fruits of righteousness; to assure the penitent of the divine pardon, and feed the faithful with the bread that cometh down from heaven; to perfect the saints in that precious knowledge, and edify the Church in that holy faith, which are the sources of all spiritual excellence and the earnest of eternal life; in short, to subvert the seat of the great usurper, and build upon its wreck the imperishable throne of the Prince of peace, and give back into the hand of him whose right it is the sceptre of a ruined world restored. Are these achievements to be wrought without the Master's presence? Are these victories to be won without the Captain of our salvation? What saith the holy apostle? "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, even of the Spirit that giveth life." Christ with us is at once the guaranty and the glory of our success. If the word proves powerful to save the hearer, it is because Christ is with the preacher. If the water conveys regenerating grace to the infant, it is because Christ is with the baptizer. If the consecrated bread and wine impart spiritual comfort and nourishment to the faithful, it is because Christ is with the celebrant. If the appointed absolution and benediction give peaceful assurance of pardon and heavenly succor to the penitent believer, it is because Christ is with the officiating priest. If Christ were not with him, all his learning, his logic and eloquence, were but a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. If Christ were not with him, all his sublime sacerdotal functions, though instituted and ordained by Christ himself, were as powerless upon the spirits of men as the moonbeams upon the frozen sea. If Christ were not with him, the blind eye would not be opened, the dead conscience would not be quickened, the rebel against God would not be subdued, the lost wanderer from the fold would not be restored, the moral leper would still remain festering in his fatal impurity. Oh! who could undertake the work of the ministry, with the least hope of winning souls, awakening sinners, edifying the body of Christ, or accomplishing effectually any of the objects of his divine commission, without the infallible promise—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!"

Moreover, it is important, in the work of human salvation, that the excellency of the power should be of God, and not of us, that no flesh may glory in his presence. When Joab had captured the city of Rabbah, he sent for King David to come and claim the honor of the achievement. When Garibaldi had conquered the Two Sicilies, he sent for Victor Emmanuel to come and take possession of the united kingdom. And Christ must have the credit of his servants' success in the good fight of faith. The warfare is ours; the crown belongs to him who giveth us the victory. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise, for thy loving mercy and for thy truth's sake." But if we could accomplish aught without his aid, the honor would be ours, and not the Master's; and there would be no justice nor reason in the command, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Therefore the Divine Wisdom hath ordered that all our success shall depend upon the divine blessing; and to this end, Christ is ever present with those whom he hath commissioned, helping them mightily with his Holy Spirit. All the power of the gospel to convert the soul, all the power of the sacraments to purify the heart, all the efficiency of Christ's ambassadors in establishing and fortifying the Church, is attributable to this unction of the Holy One. Was it not the angel in the waters of Bethesda, that gave them their healing virtue? Was it not Jehovah in the waters of the Jordan, that cured the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian? And what is it but the gracious presence of Christ in the preached word and the administered ordinance, that renders them effectual to the salvation of those who believe? Is it not as true to-day, as it was when he said it, nearly nineteen centuries ago, "Without me ye can do nothing"? Without Christ, what were our knowledge but ignorance, our wisdom but folly, our eloquence but noise? what our profession but an imposture, our ritual but a solemn farce, and all our zeal but painted fire? It is God that "always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest by us the savor of his knowledge in every place." He who girds us with the sword must nerve the arm that wields it. Now and forever, "We see the Lamb in his own light," and shine only by the reflection of his glory. The ministry, in its three orders, with all their spiritual endowments, is the gift of Christ to the Church; and through these his chosen representatives, though he is ascended on high, he still hath his tabernacle with men, and dwelleth manifestly among them; and millions of saints, throughout the earth and throughout the ages, united in one body, inspired by one Spirit, saved through one calling, sealed with one baptism, professing one faith, cherishing one hope, obeying one Lord, and adoring one God and Father of all, are built up in him, a spiritual house, a temple of living stones, whose foundations are deeper than the earth, and whose towers are lost in the empyrean. This great truth, so humiliating to the pride of man, and so glorifying to the grace of God—this great truth, that all depends upon Christ, let us keep constantly in view; listening for the Master's feet behind his messengers, and looking for the Master's blessing in all their ministrations; ever inviting his presence, and never forgetting his promise—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

And to you, my dear brother, who are now to be set apart to the functions of the Christian priesthood, the Redeemer's assurance hath a special significance. Here we are, seeking the lost sheep in the wilderness, rescuing the shipwrecked from the devouring waves, plucking with fear the perishing out of the fire. To this blessed end we have devoted all our studies and directed all our labors. This is the glorious aim to which we have consecrated the flower of youth and the ripe fruit of manhood. How consoling and encouraging the Master's promise of his constant presence! Here is the answer to every anxious question. Here is the solution of every painful doubt. Christ is with us; therefore our priesthood involves the gift of a heavenly power. Christ is with us; therefore our gospel is vital truth, instinct with a quickening spirit. Christ is with us; therefore our sacraments are not mere naked signs, but divine mysteries, infolding the grace of life. Christ is with us; therefore the Holy Catholic Church is not a ghastly corpse, but a living body, composed of living members, united to a living Head. Christ is with us; therefore let us not weary in our blessed work, nor faint under the burden and heat of the day; but look cheerfully forward to the result, and lighten the toil of tillage with the hope of harvest. Trials are inevitable. The work of the ministry is no holiday amusement. He that follows Christ must know the fellowship of his suffering. He that preaches the glad tidings must be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. He that cultivates Immanuel's land must expect often to plough the rock and gather his sheaves from the naked granite. You have embarked in a voyage which is to be contested with pirates as well as tornadoes; and if you would save the treasure, you must be ready to scuttle the ship, though you go down with it. You have set out in a campaign which requires that you should burn the bridges behind you, and brave the iron storm of battle, and march through the bristling forest of bayonets, and wrestle unto the death with the powers and principalities of other worlds. But gird up your loins like a man, in the strength of the Lord of hosts. Stand firmly for the truth as it is in Jesus. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Hold no parley with expediency. Be independent as a prophet, and intrepid as an angel, though gentle as Jesus Christ. Let all men see that you fear nothing but God, hate nothing but sin, and seek nothing but souls. Call things honestly by their right names, and never show yourself ashamed of the Church and her teaching. Let every sermon be an echo of the ancient catholic symbols, a melodious voice in the mighty anthem that comes ringing down the ages. Be faithful to your flock in parochial visitation, with godly counsel and timely prayer. Let the sound of your footsteps on the stairs be music to the widow and orphans in the garret, the light of your countenance sunshine in the dismal basement, and your presence a benediction at the bed of death. Take heed to yourself, and suffer not your spirit to be chafed and soured by adverse criticism or unfriendly speech. Allow nothing to hinder the regularity of your private devotions, or rob you of your daily communion with Christ. Come always from your closet to the chancel and the pulpit, filled with your Master's charity, and fired with your Master's zeal. Then shall you come to your people "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace," verifying by every message and every ministration the Master's precious words—"Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

O my brethren! what a glorious investiture is the gospel ministry! Whereunto shall I liken it, or with what comparison shall it be compared? Is there a glory in science? Ours is the knowledge of the unknown God. Is there a glory in letters? Ours is the living lore of the immortals. Is there a glory in poetry? Ours is the burden of the angelic antiphons. Is there a glory in eloquence? Ours is the sweet persuasiveness of a heavenly inspiration. Is there a glory in heroism? We bear the banners of the Lord in the good fight of faith. Is there a glory in royalty? We share the sceptre and the diadem with the Prince of the kings of the earth. Is there a glory in philanthropy? We preach the incarnate love of heaven, born in a cave, cradled in a manger, baptized with blood in Olivet, and enthroned over a ransomed universe upon the cross. Is there a glory in the æsthetic arts? But where are the forms and colors to rival those with which we are adorning the new Jerusalem? and what are the finest bronzes and marbles to the living statuary with which we are peopling her palaces? and who shall ever speak of purple robes and jewelled crowns, that has once beheld the immortal beauty of the humblest saint in heaven? "The glory of the terrestrial is one, and the glory of the celestial is another;" and the Platos and Homers, the Tullys and Virgils, the Shakspeares and Goethes, the Bacons and Humboldts, the Raphaels and Angelos, the Cæsars and Napoleons, the Washingtons and Wellingtons, with whose fame the earth is ringing, drawn into comparison with the men of the pulpit and the altar, have no glory by reason of the glory which excelleth; and I would rather be a priest of Christ, with the apostolic seal and signature to my commission, than wear all the laurels ever won by genius, and enjoy all the triumphs that ever rewarded valor, and sit secure in peerless enthronement over a vassal world! Faithful unto death, nobler functions await us, and loftier ministrations in a temple not made with hands. Who shall tell the privileges of a celestial priesthood? Who shall sing the raptures of an eternal eucharist? Already we enjoy the earnest. We have learned something of the ritual, and are practising the prelude of the anthem. We stand at the gate, and catch bright glimpses of the inner glory, and hear the ravishing minstrelsy of the host, and inhale the perfume from the golden altar. Soon the portal shall open, and we shall be summoned to enter; and the white-vested elders shall advance to meet us, with greetings of gladdest welcome; and visions of beauty, such as mortal eyes were never blessed withal, shall smite the sense with sweet bewilderment; and voices of wondrous melody, with the accompaniment of many harps, shall be heard chanting through the corridors—"Come in, ye blessed of the Lord! come in!" and of all our blissful fellowships in the everlasting home of the faithful, our happy intercourse with the best and purest that ever lived and died, and our long-desired re-union, realized at length, with those we have loved and lost, this shall be the crown—to be with Him in his glory world without end, who made good his promise to be with us in our ministry "unto the end of the world!"

[1] Preached at the ordination to the priesthood of the Rev. Robert A. Holland, in St. George's Church, St. Louis, 1872.

XVIII.

KEPT FROM EVIL.[1]

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.—JOHN xvii. 15.

So pleaded the departing Shepherd for the little flock he was leaving. Though the petition primarily respected the apostles and first believers, there is no impropriety in extending its application to their successors down to the end of time. We, too, are in the world and exposed to evil; we, too, are incapable of self-protection, and dependent upon the merciful guardianship of Heaven; and Christ invokes the Father's love for our preservation as for theirs: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

How often does it happen that the Christian pilgrim, weary of the way and worn out with sorrow, or longing for a higher sphere and a holier companionship, exclaims with Job, "I loathe it, I would not live alway;" or cries out with David, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest;" or responds in the depths of his heart to the sentiment of St. Paul, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." And who shall blame this longing for rest, this sighing for home, this desire of a better country? Who would not quit the scene of toil and strife and danger for the regions of eternal blessedness and peace? Who that has any perception of spiritual good, any appreciation of moral excellence, any sympathy with the pure and the true, does not prefer heaven to earth? The desire, however, should be tempered with submission, and the Christian should await with patience his heavenly Father's will. God has much for his saints to do here below. They are lights in the darkness, living springs in the desert, Bethesda fountains for the perishing. They are the Noahs, the Josephs, the Daniels of the world: yea the Abrahams, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. They are witnesses of Christ, proofs of his redeeming love, specimens of his renewing power, and pledges of his final victory. They must remain a while to win sinners from the error of their way and save souls from death. They must remain a while to adorn and strengthen the Church, to comfort their fellow-Christians, and relieve surrounding misery. They must remain a while to glorify the Author and Finisher of their faith, to weaken the kingdom of Satan, thwart his malicious design, mortify his pride, and hasten his fall. They must remain a while to exercise and improve their own virtues and graces by works of piety and charity, that so they may perfect their moral likeness to their Lord, and secure for themselves a loftier station and a brighter portion among the saints in light. The world itself, indeed, exists for their sake, and through their influence with God on its behalf: and if all the saints had been taken away with their ascending Saviour, "we should have been as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah." All which if we duly consider, we cannot fail to perceive the wisdom and goodness of the Master's request for his disciples, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Now, what is "the evil" from which Christ would have his people kept?—Sorrow? No: "blessed are they that mourn." Poverty? No: "blessed are ye poor." Persecution? No: "blessed are the persecuted." Temptation? No: "blessed is the man that endureth temptation." All these and all other "afflictions of the righteous" are turned into benefits and beatitudes by the wondrous alchemy of redeeming love. Over-ruled by divine providence and sanctified by divine Grace, they are the occasions and instruments of a salutary discipline, working together for good to those who love God, calling into exercise the holiest feelings and highest faculties of the regenerate soul, and perfecting the believer for his "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." None of these, therefore, is the evil from which Christ would have his disciples kept. What is it then? for he manifestly has some specific evil in view. It is sin, the great moral evil; or Satan, the dread personal evil; or both, for sin and Satan are inseparable. These only can rob you of your peace, comfort, confidence, purity, spiritual strength, communion with God, and joyful hope of immortality; and from these effectually preserved, no earthly affliction or misfortune, no malice or might of wicked men, can work you any possible harm, or dim by a single ray one star of your celestial diadem. From these, therefore,—from the power of sin and the delusions of Satan—Christ would have his followers kept; and from these to guard them, he prayed so fervently to his

Father in heaven. Two of the chief forms of the evil he deprecates in their behalf are heresy and schism, with the uncharitableness which they always engender, and in which they often originate. He prays that they may be one in him, as he is one with the Father—united by one faith, cemented by one love, incorporated in one body—that thus all mankind may be effectually convinced of the truth and excellence of his gospel. And oh! how important must that be, for which the Redeemer prays! There is nothing else important in the comparison. It is not important that we should be rich: the poor are to possess the kingdom. It is not important that we should be mighty: God hath chosen the feeble for his agents. It is not important that we should be distinguished: he hath promised to crown the lowly with everlasting honors. It is not important that we should be comfortable: "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." But oh! it is important, beyond the power of tongue to tell or heart to conceive, that we should be preserved pure and holy amidst surrounding depravity and pollution, that we should ever maintain "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Let us, then, join our petition to that of the great Redeemer, and watch against the deceitfulness of sin, and guard against the wiles and works of Satan, and co-operate with the grace of God to effect our own salvation, and never forget that preservation from evil is better than translation to paradise! He who hath redeemed us would not have us again captured. He who hath purified us would not have us again polluted. He who hath restored our title to the kingdom would not have us again disinherited. He who hath wrought in us an incipient preparation for his glory would not have us again disqualified for our destiny. He who hath given his life for our ransom, his flesh and blood for our nourishment, and all his eternal fulness for the endowment of our immortality, can never be indifferent to the spiritual wants and welfare of those who have been baptized into his death; and the request which he breathed so sweetly for his disciples while he was yet with them on earth, he has been repeating for all his people ever since he returned to heaven, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil."

Trusting in him who thus pleads for his disciples, and seconding his gracious intercession with our own supplications, what have we to fear? Shall Jesus pray in vain for his redeemed? Shall he fail those who have committed their all to his advocacy? Will not the Father hear the petitions offered in the name of the Son with whom he is ever well pleased? Coming boldly through his merit and mediation to the throne of grace, shall we not certainly obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need? Will God leave to the lion and the wolf the sheep for whom the divine Shepherd cares so lovingly and pleads so earnestly? "Fear not, little flock! it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" What evil agency or influence shall harm those who "dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty?" Are not the redeemed of his dear Son his jewels, his *segulla*, his peculiar treasure? Will he not hide them in the hollow of his hand, and guard them as the apple of his eye? "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Such is St. Paul's confidence, and such should be ours. But such confidence requires our hearty co-operation with Him who is always praying for our preservation from evil. We must steadfastly resist all temptations to sin. We must stand firmly and fight bravely against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. We must avail ourselves constantly of all the helps which the Church offers us in her services and her sacraments. God's grace is for those who ask it earnestly and use it faithfully. It is not in the power of Omnipotence to save from sin and Satan those who endeavor not to save themselves. You must be workers together with God, my dear brethren; and then all his attributes and resources are pledged to your success, and neither earth nor hell can do you any harm. Suffer, then, the word of exhortation, and forget not that the kingdom is taken by force and held by continual struggle. Especially important are these counsels and cautions to you who have just ratified your covenant with God in confirmation. Your rector assures me he never knew a more pleasant task than that which he enjoyed in preparing you for the hands of the bishop. As you sat before him in the lecture-room, he felt it a sweet privilege to talk to you so freely of Christian duty and responsibility. And when a new name was added to the list of candidates, he said in his heart—"Here is another gem for my Master's crown, another guest for his table, another chorister for his choir!" and he passed the new-comer over into the hands which were spiked for him to the cross, and his faith heard the angels rejoicing over one more sinner that repented. And many a time, no doubt, returning from the lecture to the privacy of his chamber, he knelt and commended you all, with tears of love and joy, to him who gathereth the lambs with his arms and carrieth them in his bosom. And often, during that sweet Lenten season, I know, he wrestled for you with the angel of the covenant through the livelong night, and ceased not till the blessing came upon the wings of the morning. Shall all his labor be lost upon you? Shall the fruit be blasted in the bud? Shall Satan and his servants triumph over the grace of God? Shall souls over which seraphs have sung hallelujahs excite the mirth and mockery of fiends by their fall? "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Observe daily your closet devotions. Never deny your Saviour by forsaking the holy eucharist. Cleave to your Church whatever may be her fortunes. Let no uncharitableness in the family drive you from your Mother's bosom. Let no

wound that bleeds in your own breast imbitter you against any of her children. Oh! how painful it is, to see people who are angry at others wreaking their revenge upon themselves! out of malice to their brethren murdering their own immortal souls! spurning the bread of life and the wine of the kingdom because they have a quarrel with the hand that offers them! refusing to take another step toward heaven, and plunging incontinently back toward the gulf of hell, because they have conceived a dislike to some person who was travelling in their company! "If angels weep, it is at such a sight!" Oh! do ye not so, beloved! Hold fast whereunto ye have attained. Let no man take your crown. Most heartily "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to save your souls, and to give you inheritance with them that are sanctified through faith in Christ Jesus." And in all my petitions for you at "the throne of the heavenly Grace," I repeat the loving words of "the chief Shepherd" for his little flock—"I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil."

[1] Preached, immediately after a confirmation, at a parochial mission, Illinois, 1873.

XIX.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH.[1]

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.—JUDE 3.

And if such exhortation were needful then, when prophecy and miracles and the gift of tongues were still in the Church, authenticating the mission of the apostles, confirming the doctrines which they taught, and commending the common salvation to all who heard them; much more now, when all these signs and wonders have long since disappeared, and those holy men of God have been for eighteen centuries enjoying their repose in Paradise—now, when the predicted perilous times of the last days are come, and heresies and schisms everywhere abound, and human reason is exalted above divine revelation, and religion is denuded of all that is supernatural, and Omnipotence is subjected to the laws of science, and answers to prayer are pronounced impossible, and Christ is robbed of his essential glory, and man is become his own redeemer, and every article of the ancient creeds is called in question, and the authority of the Church in matters of faith is scoffed at as an exploded absurdity, and the old dogmatic formulas of Christian theology are consigned to oblivion and the bats, and every one's private judgment is worth more to him than the decisions of all the œcumenical councils, and there are not wanting those in every community who deem it wiser to make a religion for themselves than to accept that which has been given to them from heaven. Surely, now, if ever, might some faithful and uncompromising servant of Jesus Christ, inditing an epistle to his Christian brethren, assert the necessity of exhorting them to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

What, then, is this faith? and why and how must we contend for it? These questions allow me to answer.

As you all probably know, the word faith is used in different senses. Suffice it at present to say, there is a subjective faith, and there is an objective faith. The former is the act and habit of believing, which characterizes the Christian life; the latter is the divine truth believed, comprehending the whole body of Christian doctrine. When it is said we are justified by faith, we are saved by faith, we walk by faith, we live by faith, it is manifestly the habitual act of Christian believing that is intended—of relying upon Christ and trusting in him, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; when St. Paul speaks of holding the mystery of the faith, exhorts the Corinthians to stand fast in the faith, encourages Timothy to fight the good fight of faith, testifies of himself that he has kept the faith, it is evidently the system of Christian truth that he refers to—the doctrine that Christ came to reveal, sent his servants to proclaim, and established his Church on earth to maintain. This objective faith, being at once for all time and for all people authoritatively delivered to the saints—in the primitive creeds by apostolic tradition, in the Christian Scriptures by inspiration of God—admits of no alteration or addition, and needs none to adapt it to the ever-changing circumstances of men. What it was eighteen hundred years ago it is to-day; and what it is to-day it will be eighteen hundred years to come. Mutation is the law of all things earthly; but heavenly truth is immutable and eternal. Science is progressive, developing gradually by the slow process of induction; but the faith was delivered all at once, during the lifetime of our Lord on earth and the ministry of his inspired apostles, and can

never be made more perfect than it was in the beginning. There are no new revelations in religion, no new discoveries of Christian truth. We must take the gospel as it comes to us, without attempting to improve or presuming to mutilate the system. The Church, in her militant probation, may pass through many successive phases; but the faith, like its divine Author, is "the same yesterday and to-day and forever." And for this Christians are called to contend—not for progress, not for science, not for freedom, not for glory, not for life itself; but for what is more precious than any or all of these—"the faith once delivered to the saints."

"Earnestly contend?" Whence this necessity? What more at variance with the prevalent ideas of the day? Who dreams now of warfare in the cause of Christian truth? Is not Christianity pre-eminently the religion of peace and love? Must we reject and oppose, as unsound or heretical, every thing that does not happen to fall within the limits of our own particular belief? May not every man hold his own opinion without assailing that of another man? Is not the gospel platform broad enough to afford room for all? Earnestly contend? "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" I answer: there is one faith delivered, not many faiths; there is one system of divine truth revealed, not many systems. That one faith, that one system, whatever it is, we are required to adopt and maintain, to keep as we would keep a treasure, to guard as we would guard the crown-jewels of our King, to fight for as we would fight for what is dearer to us than life, and devote ourselves with the zeal of martyrs to its propagation among those who are ignorant of the blessing. The apostles knew nothing of compromise in matters of faith, and they bequeathed an unfinished warfare to their followers; who maintained the cause heroically, among sages and savages, in temples and dungeons, before thrones and tribunals, on the rack and amid the flames. All this, we know, is the very opposite of the popular sentiment of the age. Few among us seem to have any conception of a Christian's duty to defend the truth as it is in Jesus "to the last of their blood and their breath," battling and dying for a creed. The spear and the shield of the warrior are laid aside, and the trumpet no longer sounds for the battle, because peace is deemed more precious than purity, and controversy is more deprecated than false doctrine, and a man's belief is regarded as having nothing to do with his conduct and his character. But the apostles knew that the Church held a trust which involved inevitable warfare, and would turn the world into a battle-ground. This trust they transmitted, through their successors, from generation to generation, to us; and we are signed with the sign of the cross in baptism, as a token of our consecration to "the good fight of faith." The struggle may be strenuous as that of the wrestler in the arena, or fierce as that of the hero in the marshalled host; but this is every man's duty, to maintain the faith against all assailants, and strive to win for it a home in every human heart. Do men light a candle to put it under a bushel or a bed? Does the sun refuse to shine lest he should offend the bat or blind the owl? And shall the Christian conceal his faith or suppress his convictions to please those who hate the light because their deeds are evil? Nay, let him proclaim it boldly and defend it bravely, like a knight-banneret in the army of the Lord of hosts; and, whatever the cost, let him urge its claims with becoming zeal upon all whom his voice can reach. To neglect this is not charity, but apathy; not humility, but lukewarmness; not liberality of opinion, but infidelity to Christ. "The Lord hath spoken; who can but prophesy?" Christ hath commanded us to proselyte all nations; shall we be recreant to our responsibility? What value do we set upon the faith which we are not willing to defend—which we attempt not to teach to the world? Where is his love for man, or his loyalty to Christ, who says nothing, does nothing, gives nothing, for the diffusion of this heavenly light? His creed may be right, but his life is wrong. He may have a Christian head, but he has no Christian heart. He entertains the faith as a guest, but he does not fight for it as a prize.

Here, then, is the lesson of the text: our duty, the duty of all Christians, to contend earnestly for the dogmatic faith of the Church. Amid the deluge of ignorance and error and sin, this is the only ark of safety. Amid the mighty conflict of human speculations and philosophies, this is the only evangel of hope. From the beginning the faith has ever had its enemies and assailants. Wherever angels lodge, the Sodomites will batter at the door. All along through the ages, the saints have had to fight for the one faith, and they must fight for it to the end. Oh! not of peaceful homes, and tranquil communities, and brethren dwelling together in unity, do the words of the apostle breathe; but of divided tongues, and embittered spirits, and the tenderest relations of life bristling around us like the iron front of battle; and as one who rides along the line of his marshalled host, he shouts to us across the centuries, and bids us earnestly contend for the faith. All those sublime verities for which "the noble army of martyrs" bled, are committed to the vigilance and championship not only of the clergy, but of each baptized believer. Some are to vindicate them by argument; all by practical exhibitions of their regenerating power. Who does not kindle at the thought of being associated in such a struggle with St. Paul and St. John, with Ignatius and Polycarp, with Athanasius and Augustine—men whose names yet thrill the hearts of millions? Now let us have done with concessions. Away with truce and armistice. The faith is worth the conflict. None can afford to be neutral. We must all fight or perish. Look practically, then, at the solemn necessity before you. "Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." Arise, my brethren, armed with the whole armor of God, and go forth to battle! Remember that the saints of all ages are with you; that the victor Lamb is the captain of your host; that the weapons of your warfare are mighty through God; that your guerdon is an unfading crown of glory, and your destined home a house eternal in the heavens! Go and contend for the faith, as those contended who now sleep in Jesus! Go and

battle valiantly under his banner, who hath promised you a seat in his throne!

[1] Preached at a convocation, Illinois, 1874.

XX.

THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE.[1]

How soon is the fig-tree withered away!—MATT. xxi. 20.

Next Friday we follow our Saviour to the cross. The last few days before his death are crowded with some of the most significant acts of his ministry. One of these we are now called to contemplate—the withering of the fruitless fig-tree by his word. To-day being the anniversary of that event, it is appropriately chosen as the theme of our discourse. Like all the other miracles of our Lord, this is a parable in action. The fruitless tree represents the Jewish people, and its fate foreshadows their terrible doom. In this interpretation we are warranted by a parable of the divine Teacher uttered a few days earlier—that of the barren fig-tree in the vineyard, for which the vine-dresser intercedes with the proprietor and obtains a further probation. The apostles, who had heard the parable and now saw the miracle, could scarcely fail to connect the one with the other, and to refer both to the infidelity and fearful punishment of the chosen people, as they exclaimed—"How soon is the fig-tree withered away!"

Fifteen hundred years before, God had brought a goodly shoot out of Egypt, and planted it in a very fruitful hill, and hedged it about with wondrous providences, and watered it with constant dews and seasonable rains, and enriched the soil around it with a thousand gracious appliances, and waited on it patiently with a careful and diligent husbandry. And it sent down its roots deep into the earth, and threw up its leafy branches high toward heaven, and gave good promise of abundant fruit. Then he sent his prophets to prune it, and stir the soil around it, and watch over it night and day. And the wild beast that gnawed its bark was pierced by the arrow of the Almighty, and the hand that raised an axe against it fell smitten by the lightning of heaven. But, instead of producing figs, it wasted its luxuriant life in leaves. Then came the Proprietor in person, hungering for the fruit of his labor; and, finding none, he tarried and toiled with it three years, and watered with frequent tears its deceitful foliage. But all was in vain, and he was forced at last to pronounce its doom, and leave it blasted and decaying upon its fruitful hill.

Let us drop the figure. Never before the incarnation was there another people so highly favored as the Hebrews. God chose them for his own, and established his covenant with them, and talked with them from heaven, and dwelt in their midst upon the mercy-seat, and led them forty years with a pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, and smote every enemy that rose up against them, and exterminated mighty nations to make room for them in Canaan, and brought them into the goodly land which he had promised to their fathers—a land flowing with milk and honey, which he gave them for a perpetual inheritance. But how often they forgot his covenant, and forsook his ordinances, and turned aside after other gods, and provoked him to anger with their inventions! Then he hewed them by the prophets and chastised them by the heathen, but they would not return from their evil ways. He permitted their cities to be sacked, their young men to be slain in battle, their virgins to be carried away captive, and their kings to serve in chains at the tables of the uncircumcised. When they returned to him with weeping and supplication, he returned to them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my heart is troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

But after all, when Christ came, he found only fruitless foliage upon his long-cherished fig-tree. Mint, anise, and cummin were scrupulously tithed; but the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy and faith—were altogether neglected and forgotten. The phylacteries were large, the prayers were loud and long, the chief seats in the synagogue were always occupied, and no poor man in vain stretched forth his hand for alms; but the religion of the Jew ran all to superstitious observances and ostentatious formalities, divine precepts were sacrificed to human traditions, a nation of hypocrites could not produce the fruits of righteousness; and, given up at last to the grossest self-delusion, they rejected their King and crucified the Lord of glory. How graciously he had labored! how anxiously he had watched and waited! and yet there was no grateful return for all his arduous toil and loving care. But is he willing to cut down the worthless tree, or blast it with his curse? See! he is crossing the ridge of Olivet on his way to Jerusalem, riding in triumph amidst the acclamations of the multitude who have witnessed his miracles and confessed his Messiahship, his path carpeted with their garments and covered with branches of the palm. Reaching the brow of the hill, he looks down upon the beautiful city, lying like a

jewelled crown before him. He thinks of all his labor for her children, and all their base ingratitude and suicidal unbelief. He knows that those who are now shouting him on his way with hosannahs will soon be clamoring for his crucifixion and mocking around his cross. Full well he knows that the chosen race will shortly have filled up the measure of their guilt, and wrath will come upon them to the uttermost. And as the vision of their ruin rises upon the eye of his spirit, with the long ages of unparalleled tribulation and despair which must succeed the catastrophe of the beloved city, he weeps as only Infinite Compassion can weep, and laments as only an incarnate God can lament:—"Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes; for the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and shall keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." In about sixty years all is fulfilled—the temple burned, the streets heaped with the dead, the plough driven over the ruins, and the hopeless remnant of a reprobate race scattered in isolated exile over the face of the earth. The curse has fallen, and "how soon is the fig-tree withered away!"

And we, my brethren—shall we not take warning from the fate of the unfaithful people? "Dried up from the roots," the old Jewish tree has been torn from the soil and cast into the fire; and we—alien shoots from without the enclosure—have been transplanted into the vineyard of the Lord. Disinherited and undone, the murderers of God's Messiah are strangers and fugitives to-day over the face of the planet; but we have succeeded to their inheritance, glorified with new revelations of grace and truth. Baptized into a better covenant, with a better Mediator than Moses, we rejoice in the mercies and immunities of a better theocracy than Israel ever knew. In the midst of our camp Jehovah has pitched his tabernacle; and by the more glorious ministration of the Spirit, through the word and sacraments of an everlasting testament, he is seeking to make us fruitful in righteousness and true holiness. Brought nigh to God by adoption and regeneration, we become heirs of his kingdom and joint-heirs with his first-born—partakers of his life and expectants of his immortality. And now we have enjoyed another season of merciful visitation, and the daily services of Lent have been like vernal sun and shower to the fig-tree. Have we borne fruit, or only leaves? Has our penitential humiliation been real and effectual, or only feigned and perfunctory? Have these thirty-six days in the holy mount deepened our communion with God and intensified our love of holiness? Are we purer and wiser than we were on Ash-Wednesday—stronger to resist evil and do good—more like Christ in meekness and charity and self-denial? Be assured, my dear brethren, that your privileges bring with them a fearful responsibility. If you have received the grace of God in vain, your Lent has been a curse, and not a blessing; and the mercies by which you have failed to profit have enhanced unspeakably your condemnation. "He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes;" and "he that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Ah! how many of us have no heart for the service of God—no pleasure in that which enraptures the seraphim! Conscience impels them one way, but inclination draws them more powerfully the other; and duty is constantly sacrificed to carnal gratifications, worldly interests, and vain ambitions. They fear God, but love him not; and though they cannot sin without a tremor, the tremor is not strong enough to repress the sin. Generally at church, they do all they can to support the public worship and encourage the heart of the clergy; but here ends their all of duty, their all of practical religion, their all of gratitude for the unspeakable love of Christ—mere foliage without any satisfying fruit.

And what can the end be but a blasting malediction from the Master? Long, indeed, may he continue his merciful efforts to make such Christians fruitful; but when his grace is habitually rejected or perverted—when his Holy Spirit is forced to strive in vain with an obdurate heart and a will obstinately set on evil—he will withhold his favors, or grant them less frequently and in inferior measure. Meanwhile sins multiply, bad habits grow stronger, the roots of vice strike deeper, and its branches grow broader and higher; till at length comes the hot wind from the desert, beneath which every green thing becomes crisp and sear. Christ rejected, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, and he who has lived in impenitence dies in despair. Oh! when conscience presents the long catalogue of uncancelled crimes, and only a few moments of wasted life remain, what can the dying sinner do? When his broken vows, abused mercies, and neglected opportunities, through all the corridors of memory come trooping up like the vengeful ghosts of the murdered, whither will he fly for refuge? Or the advent of the last enemy may be a sudden surprise, unexpected as the crash of a ship under full sail upon some sunken rock; launching the poor soul, all unprovided, with a shudder and a shriek into an unsounded sea. Or if a little space be given the delinquent, yet through the violence of his disorder the mind may be quite incapable of a rational repentance, drifting like the wrecked mariner upon a spar at the mercy of wind and wave. But in whatever form and with whatever circumstances Death may come, he comes ever to the impenitent as an avenger—avenger of God's neglected mercy—avenger of Christ's insulted love; and a fearful thing it is—fearful beyond all power of language to express—to die without hope in Christ and unreconciled to God. Oh! to be forced out at midnight, amidst howling tempests and roaring billows—no compass to guide nor star to cheer—on the eternal voyage! Beware, then, beloved, lest that come upon you which our blessed Lord foretold of those who rejected his mission: "Ye shall die in your sins, and where I am ye cannot come."

With only two exceptions, Christ's recorded miracles are all works of mercy, wrought for the relief of suffering and the consolation of sorrow; and even these exceptions, which may be called

miracles of judgment—performed, the one upon irrational animals, and the other on an insensible tree—show the aversion of his tender heart to severity and vengeance. He is long-suffering, unwilling that any should perish, desiring that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He smites only where he cannot cure. As long as there is any hope of reformation, he spares the unthankful and the evil; and never, till all possibility of salvation is past, does he visit the incorrigible with punishment. Justice must have its claim as well as mercy; and, mercy rejected, justice must avenge. The terribleness of the retribution makes nothing against its righteousness; and though it send a tremor through all the worlds of God, the obstinate transgressor shall not go unpunished. Very terrible indeed it is, and imagination staggers beneath the apprehension of the wrath of the Lamb; but terrible also was the deluge, and the fate of Sodom, and the slaughter of the Egyptian first-born, and the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host, and the end of Korah and his mutinous company, and the destruction of seventy thousand Israelites at a stroke, and the death of a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in a single night, and the sudden catastrophe of Nineveh and Babylon with all their pomp and their power, and the wrath which fell in its manifold final infliction upon the chosen people when the day of their merciful visitation was over and ended; but the terribleness of the vengeance did not stay the avenging hand of Justice, when Mercy, with broken heart, retired and left the guilty to their fate. And the dawn of the last day will be terrible, and the coming of the Son of man will be terrible, and the destruction of the Antichrist will be terrible, and the conflagration of the universe will be terrible, and terrible beyond all precedent the punishment of reprobate impenitence when the Lord Jesus with his holy angels shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire! The tree may long lift its green boughs to the sun and toss its gay blossoms to the breeze; but when the Master comes for fruit and finds nothing but a deceitful promise, smitten with his curse it shall quickly wither away.

Let us make haste to avert the vengeance. In this our gracious day—this clement mediatorial hour—let us invoke the Holy Spirit to aid us in bringing forth fruit meet for repentance. Think not that the work will be easier in coming years, when passion is weakened, and temptation is lessened, and coercive grace comes to conquer the rebel will and reclaim the alien heart. Alas! by every hour's delay you are riveting the fetters of evil habit, and multiplying and consolidating the barriers to your salvation; and the special grace for which you wait will never come till God shall revise his evangel and Christ change the whole economy of his kingdom. Now is your time for conversion, and a better moment will never occur between this and eternity. Hark! it is the voice of the Master: "Cut it down! why cumbereth it the ground?" Hark! it is the voice of the Vine-dresser: "Lord! let it alone till another Lent! I will renew my efforts; I will redouble my endeavors; I will try some new expedients; peradventure next year will reward thy forbearance with the long-expected fruit!" Oh! prayer of crucified compassion! shall it not be answered? Oh! prophecy of ill-requited mercy! shall it not be fulfilled? Beloved, it is for you to say. God hath spoken, and uttered all his heart. Henceforth all depends upon yourselves. Answer your Saviour's prayer, fulfil your Saviour's prophecy, and so avert the judgment of unfruitfulness; or else prepare for the unutterable alternative—your Saviour's blighting curse!

[1] Preached at a parochial mission in Memphis, Tenn., 1876.

XXI.

CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.[1]

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.—PHIL. iv. 11.

An instance of the moral sublime, which none can fail to admire, and all should endeavor to emulate. What an ornament of the gospel is such a spirit! What a commendation of Christianity is such a testimony! No human philosophy, no stoical indifference, no diligence of self-discipline, ever elevated the soul of man to so serene and pure an atmosphere—nothing but that religion which the Son of God brought with him from heaven to earth, the tendency and design of which is to raise its human subjects from earth to heaven. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Contentment is satisfaction with one's lot or condition. The word conveys the idea of fulness and sufficiency. It is opposed to envy, which is displeased with the prosperity of others. It is opposed to ambition, which is not satisfied with equality, but aspires to superiority. It is opposed to avarice, which grasps all it can reach, keeps all it obtains, and "sayeth not it is enough." It is opposed to anxiety, which is always taking needless thought for the morrow, saying, "What shall

we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" It is opposed to murmuring and repining, which is an ungrateful distrust of God, an unjust arraignment of his providence, an impious impeachment of his wisdom and goodness, a presumptuous spirit of rebellion against his righteous government.

St. Paul's statement seems to express complete and perfect satisfaction. In the highest sense this is applicable only to Jehovah, who is El Shaddai, God All-sufficient. But in a lower sense it is true, to a greater or less degree, of all good men. They have no sufficiency in themselves, but their sufficiency is of God. Of his fulness they have all received—the unsearchable riches of Christ. With the fatness of his house they are abundantly satisfied, and he makes them drink from the river of his pleasures. This is the only satisfying portion of the soul. Without this, men may be indifferent—may be jovial and reckless; but these are not contentment—are perhaps the very opposites of contentment; indifference, the sullen obstinacy of a perverse and rebellious will, as far from contentment as it is from submission; jovial recklessness, the effort of a restless heart to throw off its burden of care and trouble—the revolt of the whole man against Providence and against conscience. But when Divine Love brings us to its banqueting-house, and God becomes our shield and exceeding great reward, then the fluctuating soul returns to its native rest, like Naphthali satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord.

When the apostle says—"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," no one can imagine that he refers to his former state of sin; for of that he constantly speaks in terms of strong regret, and as long as he lived he never ceased to sorrow for the evil he had done. Nor are we to suppose that he means to express his full satisfaction with his present state of grace; for he is always hungering and thirsting after the fulness of God; and no Christian can be fully satisfied with his spiritual attainments till he awakes in the likeness of his Lord.

If there can be any doubt of the apostle's meaning, the verses immediately following may solve it: "I know both how to be abased and how to abound; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer need; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." These several conditions he had tested by experience; and found himself able, by the grace of God, to maintain a calm and unperturbed spirit amidst all their trying vicissitudes: thoroughly assured that all were ordered or overruled by Infinite Wisdom and Love, and must therefore work together for his good.

In another place he says: "Most gladly will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." To be content in success and prosperity, were easy enough; but to be content in trials such as these, immeasurably surpasses the power of the unsanctified human heart. The apostle, however, bore his tribulations, not merely with patient submission and quiet fortitude, but even with exultation; rejoicing evermore; in every thing giving thanks; counting the heaviest cross his greatest blessing; with all his heart glorying in the fellowship of his Saviour's suffering; willing to live or die, because in life or death God would be magnified in his body; and when the alternative presents itself in imminent prospect, perplexed only as to which he ought to prefer: "I am in a strait betwixt two; having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you; and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant by my coming to you again." What heroic resignation is here! what disinterested charity! what transcendent sublimity of hope!

And how had the apostle attained to such experience? In what school, from what teacher, had he learned so great a lesson? Certainly not from nature, nor from any human system of morality. Ever since man went forth from the blessed garden, he has been a restless and unhappy creature, always seeking repose for his spirit in some inferior good, and ever disappointed in the end. Contentment is a lesson to be learned, and to be learned only, in the school of Christ. There St. Paul learned it, not at the feet of Gamaliel. There he learned it, under the tuition of Providence, aided by the Holy Spirit of grace, by a long and painful course of discipline—by hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, desertion and persecution, shipwreck and dungeon, scourging and stoning, a life of perpetual conflict, and the frequent menace of death.

So others have learned it. And what a blessed lesson it is, well learned! Aaron, when his sons were smitten, "held his peace." And Eli, when informed of coming judgments, said: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." And Job, bereft of every earthly comfort, exclaimed: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And David, trained in every school of affliction, is ever singing of the loving-kindness of the Lord, and extolling the excellence of his mercy which endureth forever. Such contentment as these instances exemplify, nothing can produce but the grace of God in co-operation with his providence, the one purifying and the other disciplining the heart. But when we learn to draw water from the wells of salvation, we shall imbibe contentment with the draught. Believing in Christ as our Saviour, we shall confide in God as our Father. All made right within, all will be right without. An Almighty Friend in heaven—"a very present help in trouble," we have no real cause for anxious thought or disquieting fear. Faith overcomes all apprehension of evil, and enables every saint to sing with

the psalmist—"The Lord is my portion, Faith my soul, therefore will I hope in him;" and to say with the apostle—"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Brethren, let us aspire to this apostolic experience. In this grace, why should we not equal St. Paul? Is it not the high calling of every Christian? And what reason for discontent have we, that this noble hero had not? Our present state, like his, is God's appointment, and only for a season; and the discipline of sorrow and conflict may be no less needful for us than it was for him, and the result no less a blessing.

How much worldly good is necessary for any of us? how much wealth, honor, happiness? Most of our wants are artificial and unreal. We create them, or imagine them, and then complain that they are not supplied. Our first needs—our only absolute needs—are food and raiment; and having these, we are divinely counselled to be content. And many have been content with much less of them than we possess, and no health for their enjoyment—have been content without either sufficient food or comfortable raiment, and for years scarcely an hour of exemption from pain—content in great poverty and utter destitution, on the bed of sickness, in the gloom of the dungeon, under the foreshadow of martyrdom—consoling themselves with the assurance that God hath chosen the poor of this world, the afflicted, the persecuted, rich in faith, and heirs, of his heavenly kingdom.

And to be content—is it not, after all, the best way to be well supplied? "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Will not the Good Shepherd provide for his confiding sheep? Will not he who clothes the lilies and feeds the sparrows regard your necessities, O ye of little faith? Can you not trust the bounty of your King, the affection of your Father? "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Jacob asked food and raiment, and God gave him also abundant flocks and herds. Solomon prayed for a wise and understanding heart, and received in addition great riches and honor. With the divine love you are rich, whatever else you lack; without it poor, whatever else you possess.

And what avails your discontent? What can it bring you but present trouble and future regret? Why disquiet yourselves in vain? Can all your anxiety change the color of a hair, or add a moment to your little all of life? Does not God know what is best for you, and will he alter his wise and gracious economy to gratify your foolish and capricious desires? What claim have you on him? What service have you ever done him? What benefit has he ever received from your virtue? Nay, you are sharers of a thousand blessings, not one of which have you merited. Rightly estimating yourselves, instead of murmuring against God, you would be ready to say with the pilgrim patriarch: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercy and truth which thou hast shown unto thy servant."

But discontent is ingratitude. Recently redeemed from the iron furnace, shall the children of Israel complain of their hard fare in the wilderness, spurn the manna, clamor for flesh, and talk of the fish they freely ate in Egypt, of the cucumbers and the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlicks? Let them remember the toils of the brick-kiln, the voice of the oppressor, the scourge of the task-master, and all the burdens which there imbittered their lives. And you, have you not infinitely more ground for gratitude than for grumbling? God's mercies, fresh every morning and new every evening, crowd the day and crown the night. One single gift hath he bestowed—one unspeakable gift—the channel through which all others flow—worth more than a solar system to every child of Adam. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, every moment becomes an inestimable mercy; nay, every breath becomes a thousand mercies; nay, every pulse metes out incalculable mercies by the million; and while we receive them, what deserve we but reprobation and ruin infinite? Add to these the many great and exceeding precious promises with which the Bible overflows, all pointing to an incorruptible inheritance reserved for you in heaven; and tell me, have you no cause to be content?

All things ours—God with all his communicable fulness—Christ with all his riches of grace and glory—heaven with all its clustering honors and immunities—who will not say: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee"? Ye who now like Lazarus have your evil things on earth, will you not hereafter with Lazarus be comforted in Abraham's bosom? Oh! what is poverty to you who are to inherit all things—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ? What are toil and pain, reproach and persecution, the utter prostration of health, the loss of every living friend, and the burial of all you ever loved below, to you who look for your Lord's return from heaven, the renovation of the world, the redemption of the body, the immortal fellowship of the just, and the termination of all the sad vicissitudes of time in the blissful calm of eternal content?

And those of you who are trying to content yourselves with these fleeting vanities! know ye not that your treasures will decay, your glories wither, and all the delights of sense perish with the world? What will you do when the ground dissolves beneath you, and the atmosphere around you becomes flame? A surer trust we proffer you, and a nobler felicity. Come and feed your famishing souls with the hidden manna of God, and slake your spirit's thirst from the fountain of living waters. Here, in the love of God—here, in the blood of Christ—here, in the assurance of pardon—here, resting upon the Rock of ages—here, anchored in a sure and steadfast hope—you shall learn at last the tranquil blessedness of true content!

XXII.

"YE KNOW THE GRACE." [1]

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.—2 COR. viii. 9.

To the rich, commonly, what is more terrible than poverty? So great, sometimes, their dread of it, that they seek to avoid or avert it by measures the most dishonorable and even the most desperate. Rather than be poor, many will practise the worst hypocrisies or commit the greatest crimes. For thirty pieces of silver, more than one Judas has sold his Saviour to the murderers and his own soul to Satan; and to escape the possible condition of Lazarus at his gate, many a Dives has slain himself in his palace. Horrified at such insanity, we scarcely wonder at the fear from which it springs. The noblest spirits quake at the thought of want, and a prospective reverse of fortune is enough to make the bravest quail.

Yet are there cases on record in which men and women, for some worthy principle, have cheerfully welcomed absolute privation, or patiently endured the destitution of all things. The fear of God, the love of truth, devotion to duty, domestic affection, patriotic sentiment, disinterested philanthropy—have not some of these again and again led the dwellers in palaces to the hovel and the hermitage, substituting for the downy couch a pallet of straw, for the purple and fine linen a suit of sack-cloth, and for the daily sumptuous banquet a crust of bread and a cup of water? While we recognize in such cases only a conscientious service rendered to God or a life of superior charity to his rational and immortal creatures, we can but admire and honor the noble principle that thus renounces the conveniences and advantages of high birth and ample fortune for the lowest conditions of civilized humanity. The impulse is divine; the spirit is that of Christ. Some become poor through misfortune, some through improvidence, some through criminal indulgence, these through stanch adherence to duty. If they had not relinquished their riches, they must have repudiated the authority of conscience and let go their hold on virtue. Poverty has saved its thousands, where wealth has ruined its tens of thousands.

Here we are reminded of One who was originally rich beyond all human conception, but became poorer than the poorest that ever trod the earth—not because he desired the change, nor because he could not help it, nor because it was his bounden duty, nor because a superior bade him, nor because the perishing implored him, but because he loved us with an infinite love—beyond all imagination of men or angels.

"'Twas mercy moved his heavenly mind,
And pity brought him down."

First, then, we must think of the poverty of Christ as the manifestation of his grace. What was it but purest goodness, gratuitous favor, unmerited compassion, that moved him to forsake his glory and become the brother of worms and the Man of sorrows? What saw he in this revolted province of his boundless empire, that he should come to seek and save the self-destroyed? Among all the myriads of Adam's children, what one quality was there worthy of his love? Who solicited his aid, or repented of his own sin? What obligation pressed or necessity impelled the Saviour? Had he remained indifferent to our helpless woes in the heavenly mansions, who could have impeached one of his perfections? Had he smitten this guilty planet from its orbit, and sent it staggering among the stars—a reprobate world—a warning to the universe of the ruin wrought by sin—might not the minstrelsy of heaven have chanted over its catastrophe—"Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!" Perfectly he foreknew all that awaited him in his mission of mercy; yet with what divine alacrity did he vacate his throne, leave the bosom of his Father, and retire from the adoring host of heaven—as if a loftier throne, a more loving bosom, and a worthier concourse of worshippers, were ready to greet him in the world to which he came!

"O love that passeth knowledge! words are vain!
Language is lost in wonder so divine!"

Secondly, we must consider the poverty of Christ in contrast with his previous riches. How much we commiserate the poor who have seen better days! His better days what human art shall depict or finite mind conceive? Lift up your thoughts to the glorious state of the Eternal Son in the bosom of God the Father. As yet the worlds are not; no star reflects his smile, nor seraph chants his praise; but, possessed of every divine excellence in the most transcendent degree, he has within himself an infinite source of happiness. Now he arises to the work of creation, and

myriads of self-luminous suns, each with his retinue of rejoicing planets, begin their eternal march around his throne. All are his, created by him and for him; and all their countless billions of rational and immortal beings own him as their supreme Lord, and adore him as the sole giver of every good and perfect gift. Down from all this glory he descended into one of the poorest provinces of his illimitable realm, assuming the frail and suffering nature of its fallen people,

"And God with God was man with men."

Having a body and a soul like ours, he was liable to all our temptations and infirmities; and suffering—the just for the unjust—that he might bring us to God, he became poorer than the poorest of those whom by his poverty he sought to redeem. Surely, had he so chosen, with all the pomp and splendor of royal state he might have made his advent; but see! he comes as the first-born of an obscure family—a stable his birthplace—a manger his cradle; through all the years of his youth, subject to his parents, and toiling at Joseph's side with the carpenter's saw and plane; and when at the age of thirty he enters upon his Messianic mission, having no home but such as a poor fisherman can offer him at Capernaum; often hungering and thirsting over the fields and fountains of his own creation, everywhere hated for his love and persecuted for his purity; and at last basely betrayed into the hands of his enemies, abandoned and denied by his disciples, falsely accused of blasphemy, and cruelly condemned to the cross; while the powers of hell, in all their might and their malice, co-operate with the murderers of the Lord's Anointed; and the loving Father, laying on him the iniquities of us all, withdraws from the scene of infamous horrors, and leaves the immaculate victim to die alone in the darkness.

"O Lamb of God! was ever pain—
Was ever love—like thine?"

Thirdly, we must contemplate the poverty of Christ in relation to the enrichment of his people. For our sake it was—for our benefit—as our substitute—he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. "What are a million of human lives," said the great Napoleon, "to the scheme of a man like me?" Infinitely more sublime was the scheme of Jesus Christ, sacrificing no human interest to his own ambition, but enriching all his followers with the durable riches of righteousness. Benevolence, not ambition, was the grand impulse of his action. To save mankind from sin and Satan—to quicken dead souls with the power of an endless life—he came forth from the Father, sojourned in voluntary exile among rebels, and joyfully laid down his life for their redemption. How much the apostles write of "the riches of his grace"! How sweetly they assure us that he "hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him"! He became poorer than we, to make us as rich as himself—joint-heirs with him to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven. Already, indeed, the believer is rich in faith, rich in love, rich in peace, rich in joy, and rich in hope; but when the dear Lord shall return to consummate in glory the salvation thus begun by grace, the saints shall enter with him the everlasting kingdom, satisfied with his likeness and radiant with his joy. Rejoice then, O my brother! in the unsearchable riches of Christ. Is the culprit enriched by pardon on the scaffold? So Christ hath pardoned thee. Is the exile enriched by the edict that calls him home? So Christ hath recalled the banished. Is the leper enriched by the cure of his foul disease? So Christ cleanses the soul that comes to him. Is the disinherited enriched by the restoration of his lost estate? Jesus has bought back for us our forfeited possessions, and made them ours by an everlasting covenant. Is the prisoner enriched by the power that gives him freedom? If the Son makes us free, we are free indeed, and hell cannot enslave the ransomed soul. Is the alien child enriched by adoption into the royal household, making him heir to the crown? Brought nigh by redeeming blood, I become interested in all that belongs to my Lord, and whatever he receives from the Father I am to share with him in the kingdom of his glory. His voluntary poverty in my behalf makes him my Brother and associates me with him upon the throne. Taking my earthly station, he raises me to his heavenly honors. Bearing my manifold infirmities, he assures me of a share in his infinite blessedness. Emptying himself of his glory for me, he fills me with all the fulness of God! Thus we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—not, indeed, in all the amplitude of its extension, nor in all the plenitude of its comprehension; but adequately to our necessity as sinners, and adequately to our duty and privilege as Christians—we know it, and rejoice in it with unspeakable joy. What returns shall we make, or how express our gratitude? Shall we be like him who, having promised Mercury part of his nuts, ate the kernels himself, and gave the god the shells? Shall we not imitate the Macedonian churches, that first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then sent their liberal collections to the poor saints at Jerusalem? When we have given ourselves, what else can we withhold from him who gave all his wealth to enrich us, and has enriched us most by giving us himself?

"The mite my willing hand can give,
At Jesus' feet I lay;
His grace the tribute will receive,
And Heaven at large repay."

[1] Written in the last days of September, 1883, but never preached.

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